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**The construction of further education lecturers' practice**

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# **The construction of further education lecturers' practice**

**Anne Parfitt**

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
of the University of Bath

*2008*

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **The construction of further education lecturers' practice**

The study takes a qualitative approach to the study of lecturers' practice in FE colleges. The meanings and ideas that individuals hold about their practice and their narratives about work experiences are captured through an exploratory methodology. The study is based in four FE colleges and offers a comparison of experienced lecturers, novice lecturers and managers to discuss dimensions of lecturers' practice, namely their autonomy, responsibility and knowledge.

Macro policies are introduced to FE colleges by external players and are driven top - down in FE colleges. Here, colleges are defined as the meso level of the Learning and Skills Sector. Within each college's unique context lecturers have to negotiate their daily work routines and practices, that is, forming the micro arena. At the micro level, termed 'the lecturer's space' the ongoing reconciliation by lecturers of the outside-in vectors (factors in the work environment that impinge on lecturers) with the inside-out vectors (factors that emerge from their personal orientations and understandings) is examined to gain an understanding of practice.

Degraded practice found in two of the three case-study colleges is compared with the third which emerged as having less degradation. Drawing on the evidence for non-degraded practice in this latter college, recommendations are made with regards to improving learning opportunities and the workplace, so that lecturers can realise their potential for flourishing in their teaching.

In conclusion, the position of the colleges in the structured field of post compulsory education and training was explored in an attempt to explain the pattern of degraded practice amongst the case-study colleges. It was proposed that those colleges with weaker reserves of academic capital were more subject to the macro level discourses that advocated treating lecturers' practice as a form of delivery. Moreover, the case-study college with more extensive reserves of academic capital was less dependent on external stakeholders' priorities and as a consequence was able to develop its own approach with regards to forming a community of practice.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Introduction**

The diverse organisations, training companies and colleges that comprise the Learning and Skills Sector (LSS) are a set of institutions that are poorly understood, regarding their function and purpose. In spite of this lack of clarity, colleges in particular are an important contributor to post compulsory education. General Further Education Colleges (GFECs) provide much of the 16-19 years education and training in England and Wales and, moreover, there is growing emphasis on teaching children (14-16 years) in colleges, along with rapid expansion of higher education provision. Therefore, GFECs are relied upon to deliver a range of social policy agendas in their local communities, through raising levels of skills and thus creating wider opportunities for social and economic inclusion. Many college managers and college staff members pride themselves on giving opportunities for improved life chances to certain groups of learners, who once would never have entered post compulsory education or training.

Further Education is an area of education and training that witnessed movement out of the welfare state based Local Education Authority into pseudo market driven provision, where it was subject to the demands and rigours of 'being in business'. The Further and Higher Education Act 1992 marked the incorporation and commercialisation of the sector. From this point on, governments aimed to manage GFECs at arm's length, with decentralised provision tightly audited and controlled through centralised forms of accountability to the central departments of state. In FE colleges, post incorporation, apocryphal stories abounded about lecturers being bullied by macho managers and staff having no time to carry out effective teaching, as they were overburdened with bureaucratic administration that typified the performance driven college workplace. At the same time, but from the managers' side, stories circulated of 'dyed in the wool' lecturers failing to meet their responsibilities regarding teaching students, with regular unscheduled cancellation of classes and often failure to turn up to work owing to personal prior commitments. Since this time, there have been arguments about who to blame for deficiencies in college provision and how to resolve the many issues regarding these institutions. Reasonable debate has suffered from this somewhat 'Punch and Judy' contest between management and lecturers' representatives. This study takes place against this backdrop of seemingly unsettled and unhappy workplace environments in colleges.



New forms of public management (NPM) were introduced during the 1980s and 1990s to many areas of welfare. Changes were instigated across what had previously been considered bastions of the welfare state, and consequently, extensive reforms were experienced by members of staff working in various human service sectors: healthcare, personal social services and education. Research into these reforms has examined the consequences of moving away from the welfare organisation operating as 'bureau professionals' (Mintzberg, 1993) to some new manifestation. Debate has centred on whether contemporary professionals, who were once implicitly trusted to fulfil public service obligations, still work within these moral principles. The principles discussed for teachers closely relate to the notions of altruistic care of learners, and Furlong et al. (2000) identified three key dimensions of their practice: autonomy responsibility and knowledge. Researchers have explored questions of professionalism amongst lecturers, but none has positively resolved the question of whether they successfully form a professional occupation and the concept remains problematic, owing to several factors. College lecturers are a special case when compared with school teachers and university lecturers, because often, being a college lecturer is not a chosen career path. Rather, it is a job that individuals take up after considerable time in another career and equally, one that many leave after a few years experience in a college. Whether college lecturers are teachers and/or autonomous self managing knowledge workers and whether they have ever in fact achieved these high status roles, are debatable points that need to be resolved when addressing the issue of lecturers and professionalism.

Professional practitioners' roles are understood in the social context in which they are developed. Harrison and Ahmad (2000) explored this in their approach to professional medical workers and showed how power is brokered in distinct arenas for professional practitioners. Therefore, for a comprehensive discussion that does full justice to understanding the issues affecting lecturers, their colleges and the wider LSS, the researcher has to take account of such interactions. Potentially, these may occur at multiple points: the micro level (the individual lecturer) working with the meso level (institution), the meso level working with the macro level (the national policy agenda) and the micro level interacting with the macro level.

Research into the impact of managerial reforms within the service sectors has also considered what these changes have meant regarding conditions of employment. To this end, immediately following incorporation, and in many instances since, college lecturers' labour processes have been examined. The evidence showed an ever increasing work pace and ever rising workload burdens, thus leaving lecturers unable to achieve their goal of teaching well. Much of the early post incorporation literature concluded that the processes of deskilling and proletarianisation were operating. Apart from demonising college managers and praising lecturers' resistance to them, very little of this early literature (Elliot, 1996; Ainley and Bailey, 1997) offered constructive contributions to the debate on how to develop lecturers' practice and effective teaching roles in incorporated colleges. Instead, nostalgia about the halcyon pre-incorporation days and utopian views of what was going to be achieved when managerialism was defeated in the sector predominated. Studies that focussed narrowly on degraded labour processes have somewhat failed to engage with a wider sense of lecturers' professional practice, within the dynamic context of the workplace and within the on-going constantly changing operations of each college.

Accounts of the deskilling of lecturers' work have suggested that more flexible interpretations about the nature of degradation processes are required, to achieve a better understanding of lecturers' job roles. These include the dynamic processes that lead to the occurrence of degradation and the identification and comprehension of any non-degraded practice. Research has shown that lack of time, exacerbated by the intensive deployment of lecturers and the increased numbers of duties required of them, has remained a significant issue in contemporary colleges and that this time-poor working has contributed to the degradation of practice. Notwithstanding this, many lecturers still have still successfully executed tasks and carried out their duties on a daily basis. The on-going negotiations that allow this to happen, within the context of the workplace tended to be overlooked by static interpretations of work processes. Therefore more recently, researchers have rejected deskilling discourses and now posit lecturers' practice as dynamically constructed within the workplace. The college organisation is envisaged as the contained environment in which the lecturer continually negotiates and re-negotiates his/her practice. Degraded practice is potentially still an outcome, emerging from the constraints of managerial college regimes, but non-degraded, or less degraded practice has also been acknowledged as a possible outcome (Coffield et al., 2007).

It is essential to investigate the motives and orientations of lecturers, in order to understand how they construct practice within the context of the college workplace. As stated before, there is no single career route associated with becoming a college lecturer. However, it would appear to be a fair assumption that, regardless of their previous backgrounds, incoming lecturers do have one thing in common and that is the desire to teach. Wanting to do a good job and to achieve success with students is a source of satisfaction and self-fulfilment in the role. Some eminent researchers have referred to the concept of flourishing for teachers/lecturers working with their students and colleagues. This is seen as the personal growth that emerges from positive interactions, which result in knowledge creation and enhanced mutual learning for all participants (Carr, 2006). In practice flourishing is an inherently ethical concept in the context of education.

However, according to the discourse of many previous researchers, in the case of college lecturers opportunities for flourishing would appear to be few and far between. Indeed, it has been argued that the lecturer's ambition to work with students in a creative and a mutually fulfilling way faces many obstacles owing to the managerial college environment (Randle and Brady, 1997). Nevertheless, instances of lecturers finding fulfilment and realising flourishing do occur, because some lecturers continue to stay in their posts and a fair number report positively on their job satisfaction levels (Coffield et al., 2007). This raises the question for the researcher, what are the circumstances that develop and maintain high levels of satisfaction for lecturers in their practice? Moreover, can such phenomena be codified into sets of proposals for promoting a positive workplace environment?

In the light of this, there needs to be an investigation into what aspects of practice should be encouraged and nurtured in order for flourishing to occur. A good starting point is to dissect 'practice' into the component parts of autonomy, responsibility and knowledge after Furlong et al. (2000). Like practice, these elements are dynamic and are figured out by the lecturer in the contexts of two vectors that are continually at play; the 'inside – out' and 'outside – in' dyad (Dawson, 1994). The former refers to the individual lecturer's orientation and the latter to external demands constantly being placed upon him/her. This theme is developed further in chapter 2.

## **1.2 The research problem**

This study has the primary goal of understanding how lecturers construct their practice. It addresses the two issues: firstly, identifying practice and secondly, that of learning at work for lecturers. Practice is broken down into its constituent parts and the issues of degradation and flourishing are considered against these elements.

The research aims to explore whether there are opportunities for lecturers to flourish in their practice. That is to say, whether the lecturers are able to engage purposefully and have a mutual sense of development with both colleagues and students, and nurture students during their teaching. However, this study may find that their practice is degraded by contemporary managerial college systems that restrict them in exercising their autonomy, responsibility and knowledge aspects of practice, and prevent them from achieving flourishing. Moreover, the ways in which their practice is degraded and the extent to which this happens, are part of this research agenda.

To carry out the investigation of how lecturers construct their practice a set of research questions has been drawn up. These are as follows:

**RQ 1:** What do autonomy, responsibility and knowledge mean for the FE lecturer?

**RQ 2:** What do managers consider autonomy, responsibility and knowledge should be for lecturers?

**RQ 3:** How do lecturers develop their practice?

The most suitable way to address these questions is to adopt an exploratory approach. This suggests a qualitative investigation of lecturers' practice, because practitioners' knowledge is considered a situated phenomenon. That is to say, the researcher needs to investigate practice where it is situated within the context of lecturers' workplaces. The researcher can carry out interviews and collect the narratives of practitioners as they go about their daily duties and are negotiating their practice methodologies.

### **1.3 Contribution of the study**

This research contributes to the discussion concerning managerial changes introduced to the workplaces of bureau professional workers. Previously, college lecturers were managed as autonomous practitioners who, with school teachers, were employed by the Local Education Authority for their region. Lecturers were usually better paid, regarded as more

qualified and enjoyed higher status than school teachers. Nowadays, college lecturers work in incorporated organisations where their terms and conditions are often less favourable and their occupational status less well regarded than that of comparable school teachers. This study contributes to an understanding of how college practitioners go about their everyday work routines, when their workplace has undergone a substantial shift away from a professional bureaucratic organisation.

In addition, this study contributes to the literature on the internal management of colleges. The different college case-study sites show the impact of certain management actions regarding practice. Different college managements address the workload and role of lecturers in different ways, some of which have negative impacts on the lecturers' potential for flourishing in their practice. Consideration of the construction of lecturers' practice leads to the issues of their development and training needs. The question of what sort of college management helps practitioners in their learning and improves their teaching is addressed.

This study aims to look at the problematic issue of education in the post compulsory sector and the place of pedagogy in colleges. As practitioners often handle numerous roles and duties as part of their work, the place of education and teaching in a practitioner's job is considered. The research examines whether there is any difference between different groups of lecturers, i.e. novices and experienced lecturers, in how they see their practice.

#### **1.4 Outline of the study**

This study commences in chapter 2 with a review of some literature on professionals presenting certain distinctive features regarding their practice, as FE lecturers are considered to form a professional occupational group. The essential dimensions of practice, namely autonomy, responsibility and knowledge are presented. The latter part of this chapter adopts a description of practice from research carried out in the field of medical professionals that posits the concept of practice as negotiated in three arenas, namely macro, meso and micro levels (Harrison and Ahmad, 2000).

Chapter 3 applies these three levels identified in chapter 2, to the literature on Further Education and gives an account of the New Public Managerial reforms and their

consequences for lecturers' work processes. Three descriptors of contemporary practice in FE are posited: at the macro level where 'lecturers' practice equates with delivery', at the meso/institutional level where lecturers' practice is read to mean the 'learning professional' and at the micro level where practice is the 'lecturer's space'. The research framework and the specific questions for the thesis are stated at the end of this chapter.

Chapter 4 sets out the qualitative research rationale and fieldwork on the three main case-study colleges is accounted for. Section 4.5 sets out the construction of the semi-structured questionnaires and the grounded theory strategy used to analyse the results. In order to give a sense of the phenomenon of practice in situ, the findings of the fieldwork are presented by means of vignettes; short scenarios that depict an event or an issue from the participants' narratives. For each college site, two vignettes are presented in chapter 5. A commentary elaborating on the analytical themes that emerged in each college follows after each vignette.

Chapter 6 is the discussion chapter that draws together the dimensions of practice identified in chapter 2, namely autonomy, responsibility and knowledge, employing the results from the three colleges. The degree to which lecturers' practice is degraded or allows for flourishing, is discussed for each institution. The limitations on opportunities for lecturers to flourish in each college become evident through this discussion. Chapter 7 posits some implications for the management of colleges that have emerged from this thesis, and finally suggestion are made for further avenues of research.

## **Chapter 2: Discussion of Practice**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In order to understand the processes of constructing workplace practice by professional workers, such as FE college lecturers, it is worth taking the notion of ‘professional’ as the starting point. Various debates have offered explanations for the development and purpose of professionals in society and these are considered in the first section of this chapter. Next, having established the themes surrounding professional work the contested concept of practice, i.e. practice as a form of knowledge that is situated, fluid and negotiated, is investigated. This thesis intends to specifically focus on a group of professionals, FE lecturers, who negotiate their practice in contemporary colleges, that is, colleges that have undergone reorganisation along business lines. Therefore the last part of this chapter introduces a framework that posits practice as having different arenas. Practice for public service workers is figured out at three levels: the macro policy arena, the meso institutional arena, and finally, at the micro level, which is the practitioners’ space. This structure will then be carried forward and employed for the review of the literature specific to the FE sector, which is addressed in chapter 3.

#### **2.1.1 Chapter outline**

Chapter 2 is a general literature review of debates concerning practice by professional workers. Section 2.2 discusses the idea of ‘professional’ when linked to the concept of practice. Here, autonomy, responsibility and knowledge are introduced as the components of professional practice. These will form the analytical concepts for this thesis on lecturers’ practice.

Section 2.3 identifies the complex contents of practice using an Aristotelian understanding of praxis and section 2.4 discusses practice as a dynamic entity. Consistent with this, in section 2.5 practice is presented as the resolution between the actor and his/her context. Two vectors in this dynamic resolution are identified: the ‘inside-out’ and ‘outside-in’ (Dawson, 1994). In line with this approach, practice is then defined as ‘workplace practical judgement’ (Hager, 2000). Section 2.6 introduces Stronach et al.’s (2002) concepts of ‘economies of performance’ and ‘ecologies of practice’. These give a fuller understanding of practice as the practitioner’s negotiation and resolution of his/her internal

dispositions/orientations, i.e. ‘ecologies of practice’ with the external workplace milieu that is driven by organisational constraints, i.e. ‘economies of performance’.

Having outlined the nature of practice, section 2.7 discusses the levels or ‘arenas’ at which practice is negotiated. Using Harrison and Ahmad’s (2000) model, three levels are posited which are then covered in the following sections. Section 2.8 considers the macro arena and reforms to public services, at this level, through New Public Managerialism. Emphasis is put on reforms to education, as this is the focus of this thesis. Section 2.9 moves to the meso arena and discusses whether, at this organisational/meso level, reforms have achieved changes to the ‘bureau professional’ (Mintzberg, 1993) framework for delivering public services. In section 2.10, the practitioner’s ‘space’ is investigated to consider how practitioners have reacted, particularly teachers, to the ‘calculative regime’ in the reformed public services.

## **2.2. Understanding the concept of ‘professional’**

This section addresses the concept of what is meant by professional, in relation to certain occupational groups and their on-going execution of work duties. It considers some of the literature that has developed around human services practitioners, such as the functionalist and interactionist discourses.

Defining what makes a collection of practitioners as an occupational group ‘professional’, has been a sociological concern for a long time. Trait theory offered accounts of the features an occupation exhibited, to warrant the label professional and thus permitted practitioners to enjoy the status and privilege conveyed by their elevation from being simply an occupational group. Trait based approaches were associated with the functional perspective, regarding what professional groups could contribute to society (Carr-Saunders and Wilson, 1933). These writings assessed occupations against a range of measures, to see if they met a set of qualifying criteria, based on an altruistic trust relationship that had to be developed between the professional and the client. Certain occupational groups were seen to qualify as fully professional, and others as emerging or semi-professional (Etzioni, 1969; Watkins et al., 1992).

The emphasis of such functional discourses was on the moral dimensions of professionals’ practice, which following a Durkheimian approach, argued that the impartial, altruistic



practices of professional groups promoted moral authority in society. Thus professionals, it was argued, honoured the trust placed in them by clients and government, by producing work to the highest standards. That is, they were relied upon to monitor their expert practice through autonomous, collegiate self-regulatory councils. Through this process they were trusted to further the public good and prevent breakdown of social cohesion. Altruism, it was argued, was a central tenet of professional work and professionals needed to be autonomous, in order to work in the best interests of their clients. In contrast to the furthering of the moral dimension of social cohesion, Marxist approaches posited that professionals were embedded in the social stratification around the material means of production (Braverman, 1974; Burawoy, 1979). As professionals were seen as bound up in the capitalist system, this type of analysis addressed the processes of deskilling through the proletarianisation of their knowledge and deprofessionalisation. These occurred, it was argued, through moves towards greater state dominance and controls over professionals' autonomy and knowledge (Apple, 1983; Ozga, 1988).

Interactionist discourses (Macdonald, 1995) on the work of professionals have highlighted their expert knowledge. This considered how groups attempt to control knowledge domains and to legitimate their knowledge in their discrete fields. As specialist workers with a specific set of skills and understanding, professionals protect their knowledge and guard the autonomy in how they utilise it (Freidson, 1986; Burrage and Torstendahl, 1990). Professional groups use strategies of control, such as: excluding unqualified individuals, internal monitoring of practice and the protection of their rights to exercise their autonomy under license from the state. Membership of a professional occupation, to a greater or lesser extent, becomes synonymous with the status of an autonomous, self directing knowledge worker (Alvesson, 2001; Adelstein, 2007).

Such dynamic analyses of professions, where professionalism is an ongoing process, were formulated as interactionist alternatives to earlier discourses. In this vein, Macdonald (1995) termed the process 'professionalisation'. This incorporated Weber's discussion of formal qualifications and expertise, as the means for certain occupations to advance themselves as collectives in a market based society. This is achieved, by demarking and then protecting monopolies in their knowledge domains with the co-operation of the state as the condoning authority. When professional status was analysed as a continuously developing concept, the features that were considered as inherent under trait theory were

recast as the strategies that groups advance, in order to dominate a field through ‘social closure’ (Murphy, 1984; Abbott, 1988). That is, they ensure that there are no concessions in the defining of legitimate knowledge and the use of it; by so doing they demark their occupational field from rivals.

### **2.2.1 Challenges to professional status**

The entrenched monopoly status in certain fields of expertise and the lack of effective restraining influences over the autonomy of such groups, were put forward as the basis for criticism of this self regulating role. Doubt was being cast on whether the social ‘good’ that professionals claimed to contribute, through their altruistic practice, actually existed; in particular, this charge was strong in the areas of social welfare and public services (Ball, 1990; Seddon, 1991; Gewirtz, 2002). Moreover, as contemporary society has come to rely heavily on certain groups for public welfare services, a feature of managerial reforms has been to criticise and paint public servants as self-seeking and self-interested elites. The commitment to the interests of the public, once considered beyond question as a trait of certain professional groups, was reassessed under modernising agendas (Hanlon, 1998; Du Gay, 2000; Hebson et al., 2003). These discussions created the space in which new terminology and understandings emerged around the term ‘professional’ (Troman, 1997; Fournier, 1999; Evetts, 2006). It was posited that professionalism in the workplace was reconstituted. That is to say, modern terminology began to infer that the meaning of ‘professional’ should incorporate the idea of the improvement of employees’ competencies and skills. As a consequence, it was argued that the latter two features should be harnessed to agendas for enhancing the organisational performance of public services and this was particularly viewed as necessary in those reformed services where value for money was a primary objective. The value of the contribution of autonomous knowledge workers in public welfare services, was once believed to be through their altruistic disposition towards the client, as perpetuated by autonomous, occupational self-regulatory bodies. Under new market-orientated conditions a new kind of professionalism has emerged, whereby there has been: re-orientation of their commitment and responsibilities towards the employer’s goals, constraints with regard to the degree of control over their legitimate knowledge base, and limits to autonomy in the use of their knowledge (Mahony and Hextall, 2000; Evetts, 2002).

### **2.2.3 Autonomy, responsibility and knowledge**

The particular focus of this thesis is the practice of FE lecturers. They are situated in a workplace, i.e. the college, which is highly organised and driven by market-led imperatives. The tight management control of practice, through standards and benchmarking of lecturer performance, are similar to the developments in schools in the late 1990s, where teachers' practice became assessed according to criteria established by the Teacher Training Agency. Furlong et al. (2000) identified three dimensions which neatly summarised the essence of professional practice, as suggested by the literature noted here, which were under attack in this codification of school teachers' work. These dimensions were practitioners' knowledge, autonomy and responsibility. Therefore, it is these three features which will be used as an analytical framework in this study. They facilitate an understanding of the ongoing construction of professional practice under these dimensions and for this reason are explored in the following sections of this chapter.

The use of the term professional in reformed public services may well have shifted in recent years from one meaning exhibiting high degrees of autonomy, to one that is consistent with the goals of corporate market-orientated organisations. However, as much of the relevant literature has argued, for professional groups, such as teachers, a number of issues have yet to be resolved regarding the negotiation of their everyday work practices (Nias, 1989; Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2004). These include the following: Where do the boundaries to the autonomy of the professional lie? What specialist knowledge can be legitimately applied in contemporary settings? In support of whose interests are they working?

Having addressed the question of what it means to be a professional practitioner, it is of little consequence unless this discussion is related to what practitioners do. Likewise, the notion of a professional practitioner needs to be related to the ideologies underlying the practices that groups of practitioners regard as central to their work. The debates around what constitutes practice are examined in the following section.

### **2.3 Constituents of practice**

The above discussion of the term professional indicates that, for some human service occupations, practice is complex and involves more than the competencies or skills that make up the technical knowledge base of how to carry out a task i.e. the complex dimensions of autonomy, responsibility and knowledge. This section addresses the concept

of practice, focussing primarily on the teaching profession, given the subject of this thesis. However, practice in other professional arenas is also given consideration. Teaching, it has often been argued, stands out above other human service work as it engages all the values and orientations of the practitioner in creating a moral project between the teacher and learner (Drummond, 2003). Some theoretical approaches have viewed professional occupations as altruistic in their practice, and moreover, it has often been argued that teachers should possess additional orientations (MacMillan, 1993; Carr, 1999). The implicit contents of teaching professionals' work have been listed as for example, belief in; honesty, justice, fairness, courage, integrity and kindness, which go far beyond technical competencies. Enacting these orientations in executing teaching in the every day context is further complicated, because no absolute, constant definition of each 'good' can be reached. Thus Campbell (2001) suggested 'while teachers as professionals may agree on the objective values of fairness and honesty, for example, they may within the context of their individual school and classroom interpret them differently in the course of their daily practice' (p389).

Carr (2006) appealed for the preservation and recognition of these organic 'goods' as the fundamental contents of teaching practice. His appeal was based on an Aristotelian belief in flourishing as the purpose of praxis and this was to be enhanced, in the case of teachers, through their work which created flourishing in themselves and others. The motives, ambitions and aspirations of practitioners, which constitute the important contents of practice, are composed of three values: deontic norms, aretaic norms and technical norms. Aretaic norms are personal values and virtuous motivation to altruistically do one's best for the 'public good'. Deontic norms encompass compliance with a professional community's ethics, by remaining an impartial bureaucrat dedicated to public service. Technical norms, at first glance, are concerned with the craft skills of teaching, but it is impossible, according to Carr, to consider 'craft' as separate to the 'ends' to which skills are deployed in teaching. The 'ends' refer to the wellbeing and flourishing of the learner. These three dimensions of morally based orientations indicate the elaborate richness of the content of teachers' practice and thus a high degree of responsibility and depth of uncodifiable knowing are necessary for true expertise and mastery of teaching. Improving practitioner's knowledge and fostering their sense of responsibility is a serious undertaking and it is based on enhancing the internalised virtuous orientations that already reside inside the practitioner. These are best developed by an individual personal commitment to reflect on

weaknesses and the moral imperative for self improvement. Noddings (2003) talked of the ‘renaissance man’, who possesses an understanding of humanity, as the best foundation for being a good teacher. She, like Carr, argued that only from a state of wisdom and grasp of the human condition, can the teaching practitioner offer learners what they need for flourishing to occur. The virtuous orientations of the teacher, relied upon for integrity and altruism, were the most significant contents of practice. However, Carr and Noddings’ arguments for an idealised model of practice, stemming from the absolute integrity of practitioners and without guidance other than that given by peer regulation, is not seen to be compatible with management in contemporary contexts (Reed, 1996; Cooke, 2006). As suggested in the previous section, teachers and all other professional groups no longer have the luxury of autonomous decision making in the present climate.

## **2.4 Practice as a dynamic phenomenon**

The above contributions have demonstrated that practice is a complex body of knowledge that includes more than technical skills. The knowledge that such practitioners deploy in executing duties, is intricately associated with the understandings and personal orientations that each individual brings to the workplace. Therefore, in much of the literature, knowledge has often been described as consisting of different, somewhat static, dimensions. However, this researcher, amongst others, considers such an approach to be restrictive and unhelpful in achieving a full understanding of what is fundamentally a dynamic process (Schon, 1983; Boud et al., 1985; Eraut 2004).

### **2.4.1 The issue of dualisms**

Literature on practice has often separated types of ‘knowledge in practice’, into categories and discrete types, e.g. practical or theoretical, technical or abstract, tacit or explicit. However, in the more specific discussions of workplace knowledge, such dualisms have been rejected as they are seen to obscure the ‘knowing’ of practitioners. Hager (2000), for instance, criticised the construction of a dichotomy between tacit and explicit dimensions of knowledge (Polanyi, 1969). He considered this divide as unhelpful, preferring a concept of judgement, which was defined as ‘seamless, holistic workplace know-how’ coming from ‘the developing of a capacity to make the right judgements in the workplace’ (Hager, 2000:283). Likewise, the divorce of ‘know how’ from ‘know that’ and ‘know why’ (Winch and Gingell, 2004), was criticised by Hager as an inadequate way of accounting for the ‘seamlessness’ of activities in modern workplace contexts.

It is useful to note that Seeley Brown and Duguid (2001) suggested using investigations into 'practice' itself, as a means to avoid the conceptual dualism that occurs when using agency or structure as explanatory models of what is important in the development of workplace knowledge. One dualist agency argument proposed that the practitioner as agent offers up the actor as actively seeking and achieving tacit understanding through 'indwelling' and engaging in 'becoming' (e.g. Ratto and Hall, 2006). However, this treatment pays little or no attention to the surrounding structural context. By contrast, regarding the structural dualism, context was usually over emphasised in models of communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Swan et al., 2002) that accounted for knowing as being driven by the structure of the environment and this determined the practices and orientations of the practitioner (Roberts, 2006; Handley et al., 2006). Under the lens of practice, according to Seeley Brown and Duguid, the problematical actor can be accommodated through seeing practice as combining both dimensions of knowledge, the explicit and the tacit. The problematical definitions of the parameters of the structure can be conveniently left 'undefined', because communities or contexts for practitioners are accepted as spreading beyond the immediate situation bounded by a study, in other words a study of workplace judgement and actions cannot exist in isolation from the wider context (Sfard, 1998).

To bring together some of these ideas, about where and how judgements may be developed, it is useful to look at Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) concept of the 'ba'. The 'ba' is defined as a 'shared context in motion' (Peltokorpi et al., 2007:51) which serves as the ring or field in which all actors convene for their creation of practice. Although practitioners may participate in many diverse, productive communities in the rest of their lives, a special investigative focus is put on the one arena cordoned off within this 'ba'. The ring or stage is posited as having two forms: an abstract notion, existing in the minds of participants, and a concrete observable set of happenings, when people meet up in the workplace for the purpose of a learning project. This concept of 'ba' recognises that practical workplace judgement is developed by practitioners who have many experiences and past judgements to call upon in the immediate situation, but for research purposes, some sort of 'ring fencing' of the context has to be established.

## **2.5 'Inside - out' and 'outside - in'**

Above in section 2.3, it was argued that the internal orientations of the practitioner are very significant contributors to practice and are central to the undertaking of teaching. However, Seeley Brown and Duguid suggested that other factors than these orientations are relevant in the workplace setting, and this in part was also recognised by Carr in the importance he attached to collegiality in fostering deontic norms. For example, in the context of teaching there may be a move towards consensus in a school over pupil discipline or the issuing of homework. Dawson (1994) focused on the relationship that practitioners are engaged in with exterior factors, factors external to their own unique embodied selves. He put forward the idea that there is an exchange of vectors from inside towards the outside and vice versa. Taking the norms described by Carr, Dawson suggested the inside – out dimension can be identified in teachers' orientations towards fostering flourishing in themselves and in the learners. At the same time, whilst practitioners are engaged in their workplace situation, certain aspects of this rub off on them, and in part, these external influences shape and prescribe the individual professional's ways of perceiving, identifying and deploying effort and skills in resolving daily challenges, i.e. this is the outside - in vector. The capturing and understanding of this dynamism, as identified by Dawson, in terms of the construction of professional practice, thus becomes an important goal of any research into workplace know-how.

Bacon et al. (2000) examined what practitioners do and how they know what to do in a given workplace situation and thus developed this concept of practice as a dynamic entity, that is, 'duties are defined and constrained by their fields and methodologies of practice, themselves the object of continual contest, internally and externally' (Bacon et al., 2000:14). As they argued, firstly, practice is constructed through on-going processes: individuals are executing duties within problematic settings, constantly figuring out what they do and how they construct their work 'methodologies'. Secondly, this statement reinforces the notion that practice is a situated phenomenon. The carrying out of duties was described by Bacon et al. as taking place within the backdrop of complex multi-dimensional and multi-level environments known as 'fields'. 'Methodologies of practice' is a useful term that they employed when discussing teachers, as it suggests that teachers' practice is not sufficiently explained as performing tasks, but rather is an ongoing reconciliation of different demands made upon them. This term 'methodologies of practice' captures the mediated and provisional dynamics operating when practitioners are executing tasks. Bacon et al. proceeded to note the following points concerning the

contents of such practice: ‘nature’ which prompts questions about the roles and orientations possessed by professional practitioners regarding their work, ‘intentions’ which focuses on what professional practitioners want to achieve through their actions, ‘outcomes and consequences’ which suggests a variety of impacts of professional practitioners’ actions (Bacon et al., *ibid*).

As already posited, the milieu in which a practitioner executes his or her duties has a determining impact on his or her methodologies, and these are constantly varied, adapted and curtailed according to each ‘situation’. The external contextual factors alone do not suffice to account for variations in practitioners’ methodologies. The construction of methodologies is also taking place at a point internal to the individual, indicated above as centring on the nature, intentions and outcomes/consequences of what they do. This researcher would argue that practice methodologies cannot be divorced from the practitioner, a subjective being who: possesses values, has certain orientations towards the milieu and seeks purpose in his/her work. To account for what happens in the blending of internal and external influences, Bacon et al. stated that it was useful to approach practice as a ‘text, constituted in and through various forms of knowledge’. From this account of the contents of practice, they have contributed the term ‘methodologies of practice’ as offering some way to form a bridge between the internal and external dimensions. This would appear to be consistent with the arguments put forward by Seeley Brown and Duguid, as described above.

As with Bacon et al.’s ‘methodologies of practice’, Hager’s (2000) ‘workplace practical judgement’ i.e. how practice occurs, is contingent. Four main aspects of ‘judgement’, synonymous with dynamic workplace practice, were offered by him in support of this proposition:

- Personal characteristics: humans’ responses to workplace situations are based in rightness; ‘Rightness of a judgement will rarely involve notions of truth and falsity alone. Rather, intellectual practical and moral virtues will all figure’
- Specificity: features that characterise any workplace situation at a given time appear in combinations which are; often ‘rare or even unique in the practitioner’s experience’
- Changeability: features of workplace situations can alter, combinations of features are not stable and practitioners themselves are altered in part by their judgements



- Social forces: ‘individuals respond to and change features of situations, but the influences by which they do this are strongly social and communal’. Thus Hager suggests that as norms and values evolve in workplaces, ‘very different workplace practical judgements are made’ (Hager, op. cit. p291).

The growth of practitioners, in that they learn whilst carrying out their duties, was clearly accepted by Hager, as shown in the third concept of changeability. Moreover, the mechanistic approach to change, suggested by Schon (1983), of the reflective practitioner who learns step by step, reflection subsequent to action, is disjointed and not regarded as sufficiently ‘seamless’ by Hager. His notion of seamless change posits a more fluid situation, in which the individual through a constant process of returning to the issue reconciles the self with the matter of concern. Moreover, this can happen in a variety of different times and perspectives, rather than the simplistic approach laid out by Schon. Eraut (1999, 2004) commented on the occasions in which practitioners think and suggested a more complex picture for reflective opportunities. In addition, he proposed that time should be allocated in the workplace setting, so that creative reflection can take place.

## **2.6 ‘Economies of performance’ and ‘ecologies of practice’**

Returning to the notion that practice is dynamic, Stronach et al. (2002) analysed the situation of practitioners and emphasised ‘flux’ between the organisational milieu in which they are located, and, the methodologies which they deploy. They used ‘economies of performance’ as the term to describe externally imposed measures that affect practice. Economies impinge on an individual’s practice by restricting their scope for action. On the other hand, by contrast, coming from within the individual practitioner are the methodologies termed the ‘ecologies of practice’ (Stronach et al., 2002). These form intuitively from practitioners’ orientations towards creating flourishing in others. As can be seen this advances the inside-out, outside-in formulation, in that ‘the inside’ is viewed as intuitive and ‘the outside’ as mechanistic. Stronach et al.’s analysis underlined practice as the constant state of reconciliation by practitioners dealing with the conflict of ‘economies of performance’ on one the hand, with ‘ecologies of practice’ on the other. Sometimes, they veer towards a context driven performance as practice (outside-in), and at other times towards an orientation driven practice (inside-out), but always, obviously somehow they reach an accommodation in the execution of their tasks and practice goes on.

For professional teachers, their internalised orientations towards creating flourishing are considered to be reinforced by factors such as: training to become a qualified practitioner, norms offered by collegiate regulation, participation in a community of peers and career patterns based on experience and mutual recognition of competence. This contextualises the above notion of sustainable ecologies of practice. By contrast, economies of performance suggest a workplace environment founded on principles that are antithetical to human flourishing. The term ‘economies’ reflects the efficiency and effectiveness imperatives of the managerial agenda of a calculative regime; one based on audit and inspection (Miller, 1994; Rose, 1999). The concept of practice as the dynamic negotiation and reconciliation between economies and ecologies, in the hurly burly of daily proceedings undertaken by the actor, in the workplace setting, has been addressed. In sum, the case has been made for taking practice as constructed from a complex and dynamic set of interacting factors and thus, as proposed, addressing practice permits study to be ‘closer to the point at which working life is lived’ (Seeley Brown and Duguid, 2001:202), rather than as a mechanical set of dualisms.

## **2.7 Three arenas: macro, meso and micro**

A number of researchers have proposed that to get an understanding of professional practice, that is to understand the practice methodologies used by the individual, requires knowledge of three different levels of resources involved: macro, meso and micro (Kitchener, 1999; Harrison and Ahmad, 2000; Kragh Jespersen, 2002). This emphasises the essential levers, demands and actors that come to bear in the working out of methodologies by practitioners. These levers and actors all require an introduction, if there is to be comprehension of what is going on in the ‘ba’ (see above in 2.4). It needs to be recognised that there may be causal relationships between practitioners, these three different levels of resources and their eventual construction of practice.

In public services such as: health, education and social care, practitioners assert their roles and figure out methodologies of practice alongside other occupational groups, meet organisational goals and observe budgets for organisational resources (Harrison and Ahmad, 2000). Simultaneously, in other arenas, they, together with their professional associations, have to negotiate around their occupational roles with stakeholders, government agencies and client representatives, to determine their *modus operandi*. For example, in the medical profession there is on-going debate around job delineation

between doctors and nurses. On the other hand, in schools, there are similar discussions regarding teachers and classroom assistants. Harrison and Ahmad reflected on these coexisting and codetermining arenas for professional groups and described practice as operating at three levels: at the macro level - the contest over the experts' legitimate knowledge in the field, which tends to happen at the national policy level, at the meso level - individual institution's relations with the state and the micro level - practitioners' execution of daily work duties and working patterns.

This tripartite analysis is used here for outlining the situation in contemporary public services and will be then carried forward to the next chapter, to discuss the literature on FE colleges and how practice is constructed by lecturers.

## **2.8 Macro level**

The following section outlines the nature and pervasiveness of the reforms to public services throughout the 1980s and 1990s, to facilitate an understanding of the current situation for public service practitioners. Firstly, the issue of managerialism in public services is dealt with and secondly, the case of education and the teaching profession is examined. In this macro section, although it is very significant, the ideological context in which professionals operate will not be examined extensively, as it is only a background feature to the research focus of this thesis. The examples presented for the macro and meso levels mostly draw on studies from education. Historically, after the Second World War, FE colleges, like schools, were LEA controlled and funded. Although there were some changes in the 1970s and 1980s, the biggest shake up occurred with shifting to local management of colleges under the 1988 Education Act and incorporation of General FE colleges in 1992. This shows that until fairly recently the nature of the delivery in colleges and schools was fairly similar.

### **2.8.1 New Public Managerialism**

The macro context for public services was featured by the shift away from the established post war welfare settlement and emergent questioning of the role and extent of government involvement in the direct provision of welfare. Clarke and Newman (1997) identified the crisis of the welfare state as located in social, economic and political discourses during the 1970s, when public expenditure on welfare shifted from being viewed as a collective social investment, to being a restraint on competitiveness, at all levels of society. Growing

political confidence in market mechanisms for the delivery of welfare went hand in hand with the adoption of new forms of generic management in public service organisations, to ensure fiscal prudence. Central government dissatisfaction with the welfare regime also came from a questioning of the allegedly disinterested practices through which services were provided and the so called neutrality of professionals. Many professionals were seen, by some, to be aloof from major upheavals in society with regards to minority issues such as race, gender, disability that fell outside of the universal welfare state model that had been a product of post war ideologies (Harrison and Pollitt, 1994; Ferlie, 1996; Clarke et al., 2000).

Criticisms of welfare administration and drivers that forced changes were thus not confined to economics, although the financial crisis heightened tensions between departments with restrained budgets. Moreover, practitioners called for more resources in order to respond to accusations of bias in the ways that they were dealing with marginalised client groups. Ranson (2003) identified four stages of reform, starting with ‘bureau-professional accountability’ in the 1970s, moving to ‘neo-liberal accountability’ and then ‘neo-liberal contract management’, ending in the 2000s with ‘neo-liberal state audit’. This journey of reform was followed at slightly different rates and through different implementation strategies in each public service, and although each public service followed this pattern, none of them conformed to a common path. However, accounts of these reforms, such as Ranson’s (2003), identified a range of changes that can be summarised as being centred on the imposition of four forms of controls: competition (market and non market forms), decentralised operations (with centralised strategic command), wide spread use of performance management techniques, and standardisation and deskilling of work in services (Hogget, 1996:12)

The impacts of these forms of control were consistent with the underlying distrust of leaving individual wellbeing and the public good to the professionals, who were seen as not necessarily using autonomy and specific knowledge in an honourable manner (Trainor, 2000; Nixon, 2004). Contractual relationships negotiated through market-like structures were considered a better way to serve the individual and the public. When introduced, the four forms of controls identified above made for far reaching consequences. Simkins (2000) in his discussion of reforms in education listed five areas in which the controls made significant adjustments to the jurisdiction of practitioners:

- Values shifted from client centred values, to those related to the mission of the organisation
- Decision making shifted from decisions based on bureaucratic rules/professional discretion, to those made by managers using specialist management techniques, modelling best practice in each sector
- Agenda setting shifted from agenda setting based on the needs of clients as identified and formed by professionals, to that based on organisational objectives according to managers' responses to the environment/external factors
- Norms shifted from norms based on wellbeing, needs and rights of clients, to those based on efficiency, performance, and customer service
- Legitimacy shifted from power located with the professional, to managerial power that required that managers were given the 'freedom to manage', thus disempowering other parties such as: political representatives, workers and professional grade staff.

Exworthy and Halford (1999) summarised the situation by suggesting that reform was fundamentally a contest over who was to dominate in the public sector: new managers or professionals. Although usually presented in terms of extreme conflict and rivalry between stylised opponents, they suggested that the contest was resolved through a mix of compromise and accommodation across different fields of welfare provision and in different ways in specific public service organisations. The debate was whether professionals in a service inevitably moved to becoming 'corporatized employees' or whether more intricate processes of adjustment were occurring.

### **2.8.2 Macro reforms and the education service**

The macro reforms, as described above, are now briefly considered in relation to teaching. The teaching profession has always been made up of discrete groups of workers, principally divided by the specific age categories of their learners. Thus school teachers and university teachers, as separate professions, have enjoyed different trajectories of professional dominance over their respective fields of expertise. FE lecturers are yet another group who have had a unique trajectory, as alluded to above and this will be elaborated upon further in chapter 3. Nevertheless, for all groups concerned with teaching, managerialist reforms to the education service were backed at the macro level by central government, resulting in a reassessment and reinterpretation of the legitimate nature and

purpose of educating children and young people in society (Ainley, 1999; Hargreaves, 2006).

### **2.8.3 Re-defining pedagogy**

The post war settlement that envisaged post primary education as providing basic training for employment was enhanced by a liberal-humanist agenda in the 1960s, which aimed for the social development of all individuals (Poynter, 2004). This was perpetuated by teachers, lecturers and academics exercising their authority in defining the nature of education, best demonstrated in the comprehensive education system that was based on the egalitarian principle of the holistic flourishing of the pupil. During the 1980s and 1990s, the spread of market mechanisms for the efficient distribution of society's resources through the employment market, plus the responsibility of each individual to furnish himself/herself with the necessary skills for work, contributed to the re-definition of education as employment related vocational skilling (Driver and Martell, 1999; Fox, 2004). The level of impact on the different sectors of education, schools, colleges and universities, varied according to the strategies initiated by central government. Whereas it may have once been accepted that schooling helped create a unified community, the promotion of choice has resulted in a range of learning experiences being available. Thus, it has been argued in some quarters that schooling has become individualised, fragmented and anti communitarian (Thrupp and Hursh, 2006), through the proliferation of 'markets' in different types of schools/institutions.

Parallel to the ongoing re-defining of education as skills related training, a new therapeutic goal for such teaching has been identified. According to Ecclestone (2004), the therapeutic tone is 'problematic because it infects progressive educational goals and practices by extending processes and ideas associated with guidance, mentoring, therapy and counselling into pedagogy' (p134). In these ways, the goal or function of education has been impoverished. The focus of much teaching was on students gaining tangible skills for employment, thus rendering the individual socially included through employment. This ignored the argument that the qualities gained through a liberal schooling had always significantly, although not necessarily explicitly, contributed to 'employability' (Walsh, 2006). It had a significant effect on changing the demands being made on the teacher.

It has been illustrated above that the ideological shift in education was profound, as this discourse predominately viewed learners as embodying little more than vocational skills and competencies, rather than being innately complex humans. Teachers and lecturers were thus reconsidered as agents employed to achieve this strictly defined agenda and this had a significant effect on their autonomy, type of knowledge and notion of responsibility. Their effectiveness was policed through external monitoring by central government: audit mechanisms and inspections of performance. The strategies deployed by central government to achieve reform have been experienced in the education sectors as contradictory and problematic. Paradoxes arose because the majority of managerial reforms, in general, have worked in conflicting directions, such as: trying to be ‘‘hands on and hands off’’, combining ‘the old and new’ and/or seeking ‘quality and quantity’’ (Hogget, op. cit. p28).

The effects of reforms to management of public services have been outlined here to demonstrate the macro context of the change in ideology permeating through education and its delivery. The decline in teachers’ professional dominance over setting the macro agenda for educational reforms, through their professional bodies, and the increase in the role of others dictating the nature and deployment of their expertise, has also had mixed consequences for the meso arena.

## **2.9 Meso level**

It is appropriate to turn next to the level down from the macro level, that is, the meso or institutional level. Studies of the reforms that have introduced managerial approaches to public sector services have suggested that outcomes are not very predictable at this level (Kitchener, 1998, 1999; Kragh Jespersen et al., 2002; Kirkpatrick et al., 2005). Mintzberg’s (1993) concept of the professional bureaucracy archetype is presented here, as the starting point to assess the degree to which reforms brought about by new public managerialism have changed the role of the professional. Mintzberg’s archetype highlighted the fact that professionals used to operate with high degrees of autonomy.

### **2.9.1 The ‘professional bureaucracy’ seen as a static entity**

Mintzberg (1993) described the organisational design of welfare services under the post war settlement, as fitting the organisational design archetype ‘professional bureaucracy’. A professional bureaucracy, as an ideal type, was described as exhibiting the features of: a

comprehensive body of rules and procedures, specialisation of functions within a well ordered hierarchy, defined powers and responsibilities for each role, and, for the employees, formal equality in recruitment and promotion. Knowledge workers upheld the ethos of the public service by working as managing professionals (e.g. head teacher), termed bureau professionals. This organisational format by following the prescribed systems and hierarchies, offered what was considered effective deployment of resources. Services were provided by trusted practitioners using discretionary decision making processes as legitimated under collectivist welfare regimes.

Changes to the professional bureaucracy archetype have been instigated by government at the macro level, looking to reform services and shift them to a more business orientated 'corporate bureaucracy' model. Such imperatives to change the archetype of an organisation are, however, mediated by the organisation's employees according to their 'interpretive schemes' (Greenwood and Hinnings, 1996), that is to say, according to their orientations towards their job. Drawing on studies carried out in the private sector, Greenwood et al., (2002) and Greenwood and Hinnings (op. cit.) highlighted the tendency for powerful groups, such as professional associations and elites, to resist 'radical' moves imposed from outside. Actors' responses, they concluded, are fashioned by 'already existing commitments and interests and their ability to implement or enforce them by way of their existing power and capability' (op. cit., p1048). Professionals involved in change situations often have habitual attitudes towards aspects of their jobs and do not see the benefit of some reforms. That is, they refuse to implement them and therefore a compromise has to be reached. The stronger the actors are, the more likely they are to be able to resist any imposed reform which goes against their orientations. In the case of externally instigated pressures to reform, a consensus would have to be arrived at and the resolution would have to rest somewhere between the professional and the corporate bureaucracy archetypes.

Recognising that professional practitioners are likely to resist reforms, consideration now turns to examine the extent to which actors, within departments, at practitioner grades in the welfare state sector, have had the power and capability to modify externally imposed changes. The public sector may be different to that of the private sector for the following reasons. Firstly, there is a different imperative in the public sector because of the moral dimension of acting for the public good. Secondly, people working for the state, it could be



argued, are more likely to work in collectives than people working in the private sector (Reed, 1996; Ackroyd, 1996). Some commentators have argued that a move from professional bureaucracy has been achieved (Harris, 1998). However, a number of commentators have taken the opposite view and these will be considered first.

### **2.9.2 The ‘professional bureaucracy’ seen as undergoing change**

It was proposed that human service sectors have been robust in the face of reforms, owing to the strong sense of the collective and belief in a public service ethos, as presented above. Some studies of ‘reformed’ organisations in the public service sector have argued that no radical shift in organisation design has been achieved (Kitchener, 1998, 1999; Kragh Jespersen et al., 2002; Kirkpatrick et al., 2005). Resistance has watered down or repelled managed forms of performance and control. This is particularly so at the meso level, because governmental reforms have led to the decentralisation of institutions, in spite of the state increasing central power. This formation of new entities, it has been suggested, leads to a reinforced sense of practitioners’ identification with a public service ethic at this level and hence, resistance to change is more powerful (McDonough, 2006). Kragh Jespersen et al (2002) suggested that this meso level of resistance is particularly enhanced when it is in tandem with equivalent opposition at the macro level. For example, professional dominance over the interpretive schemes in medical care institutions was due to physicians’ historically embedded protection of their power to ‘gate keep’ over alternatives to the status quo, at the national level. Dominance of the political and administrative structure in healthcare by elite practitioners, in effect, prevailed in this macro arena and the degree of success of managerialist innovations at the meso level, such as job restructuring in favour of other occupations like nursing, was diluted. This was because the same actors were involved at both levels. However, this researcher considers that this hold by surgeons and doctors over the agenda is an extreme case, as will be elaborated upon below.

Kirkpatrick and Ackroyd (2003) investigated the history of professional status in social work and described how managerial initiatives were introduced to the pre-existing meso contexts of Social Services Departments (SSDs). A key organisational feature of SSDs was that management and practice were separate roles and to combine the two was considered by practitioners to be compromising ‘common sense’, that is, their orientations. A further feature of social work was that although as an occupation it was mediated through local

government structures and departments, social workers in reality, kept a great deal of discretion over specialist knowledge in fieldwork, which they believed would be compromised by a shift to direct forms of management. In this context, SSDs reforms were implemented by central government in ways which significantly increased resistance. They included:

- rapid top down implementation from central government.

This meant forms of consultation and collaboration within local departments failed to appear, which alienated practitioners.

- professional associations were excluded from discussions

The trade unions and representatives lost their significant role in conveying the values and new orientations throughout the sector.

- middle and senior managers were quickly disillusioned

The management grade staff who were assumed to be in the vanguard and supportive of change, experienced de-layering and work intensification, which coloured their enthusiasm for reforms.

- severe resource constraints during the 1990s coincided with reforms

The result of this was that new work practices became associated with service cuts, rather than better design of the services (Kirkpatrick and Ackroyd, 2003).

The implementation of reforms and consequent resistance of practitioners are summed up as leaving the typical SSD functioning as a 'hybrid', where practitioners' values dominated, whilst the organisational structures and processes were managerial i.e. run on a calculative regime. The discretion displayed by practitioners, their notion of their primary responsibilities as directed towards their clients and the need to have a rich, embedded reserve of knowledge to cope with the daily contingencies of the workplace, were not substantially changed to conform to the calculative regime. This conclusion suggests that there is no inevitability about the change of organisational design in departments and agencies and mixed operations can exist side by side. As can be seen in SSDs, there was resistance to change but it was not as strong as that seen amongst elites in the medical profession.

### **2.9.3 Introducing a 'calculative regime' at the meso level**

Turning to the field of education, as will be shown, the parameters for assessing the extent to which performance driven professionalism are different to the two cases above. Causer and Exworthy (1999) posited that the key issue in education was the delegation of financial responsibilities to organisations, where previously this role had not been devolved to the institutional level. In the case of schools, this shift to a calculative regime occurred under the introduction of LMS (Local Management of Schools), when for the first time, the LEA lost control and responsibility for administering resources and financial accountability was given to individual schools. This change initiated and then perpetuated 'economies of performance' at the meso level. When head teachers had to use explicit measures as the gauge of an individual colleague's competency, a rift emerged between professionals who were also managers and rank and file staff. Performance was juxtaposed with the established orientations of practitioners and this prompted conflict and disharmony. Causer and Exworthy (1999) suggested that the regime inevitably led to practitioners responding in ways that complied with performativity and this reinforced and increased the degree of success of the managerialist reform in schools, i.e. at the meso level. From this, it appears that the resistance to central government reforms has been fairly weak when compared with the other two cases above.

From the literature, the effects of reforms stemming from the macro level, when introduced to the meso level, exhibit different patterns and different levels of successful implementation. What is significant for this study is the notion of a calculative regime shifting from the macro arena of central administration, to the meso level. At the meso level, calculative systems and operations in the public service sector have been applied by senior managers, within the front line service agencies and institutions. Whereas previously the bureau-professional senior manager had a commonality with rank and file practitioners, the senior managers under this regime have had to address additional priorities such as performativity and efficiency. As already suggested by Stronach et al. (2002), the constraints of administration and the priorities of practitioners may thus be in a state of flux and still yet to be settled in the negotiation process at the meso or institutional level.

## **2.10 Micro level**

Having considered the inconclusive picture of the extent of the reforms at the macro and meso levels, this section examines the case of individual practitioners in education. The examples are drawn from schools with calculative regimes, as described above.

### **2.10.1 Compliance**

At the micro level, two arguments emerge. One is that the practice of individual teachers when situated in a calculative regime, over time, will inevitably align with the changed organisation. This approach posits the workplace environment as determining the practices and the orientations of the practitioner: the college or school context bends the individual to fall into line with the performance requirements of their team or department, as resistance is futile and resisters end up leaving or are forced out. The individual consciously takes on the appropriate orientation that helps maximise their self advancement in the organisation and subsequently, this orientation becomes a subconscious part of the individual. The individual now can be considered as having internalised performance discourses and thus full commitment can be obtained from them in the work milieu. One explanation of the means through which an organisation comes to have one dominant 'managerial' consensus, in the case of a college this would be a consensus set by the Principal and Senior Management Team (SMT), is offered by Lukes' (2005) discussion of the ways in which power works. Lukes posited that the dominant interest in an organisation defeats opposition by covert and overt strategies and by exerting its power at different levels and in different ways achieves a dominant 'hegemony'. Actions include strategies such as: directly controlling decision making, covertly manipulating internal political agendas to keep potentially contentious alternatives out of the decision making arena, and the encouragement or persuasion of individuals to adopt dispositions and interests that align with those of management.

Modern versions of human resource management rely on strategies that encourage their employees' journey to conformity, as it is through individuals committing themselves to the organisation that optimal performance is achieved (Dahler-Larsen, 1994). Such strategies have inadvertently impacted on the wellbeing individuals. This rather ruthless one sided approach has been termed 'hard' versions of human resource management. The key error of this approach is the presumption that management knows best and the Panglossian notion that all proposed changes are for the better. This position is arrived at since no dialogue remains between the protagonists under the imposed strategies of surveillance and, moreover, the uncontested prevailing value 'consensus' encourages concertive (mutual) policing amongst colleagues (Barker, 1993; Thompson, 2003).

There have been many accounts of severe external constraints on performance, which have created a lot of pressure on teachers (Ball, 1997; Troman, 1996, 2000; Troman and Woods, 2000). Case-studies have shown incidents of disillusionment, vulnerability and a sense of loss of professionalism, when the performance controls are at odds with the orientations practitioners wish to follow. In some cases individuals opt to quit their employment as they are unable to participate any longer, because they consider the demands made on them have become unacceptable and antithetical to their sense of professionalism. For example, Ball (2003) ironically suggested that the ‘good’ contemporary teacher, is a practitioner who successfully replaces unfaltering allegiance to fostering children’s wellbeing, with a commitment to organisational excellence, in terms of excelling in external audits such as Ofsted inspections and improving rankings in league tables. This paradoxically, it is argued, may be at odds with the well being of certain children. This account of practice suggested teachers’ orientations towards acting altruistically, i.e. in children’s interests, could be inhibited in contemporary schools driven by the ethos of managerialism.

### **2.10.2 Resistance**

Contrasting with this seamless, compliant assimilation happening in situations under modern managerialism, the majority of researchers, including this one, contest this view. Many of these researchers have given accounts of practitioners’ orientations prevailing, i.e. there was strong resistance to change. Practitioners across the public services, not only in education, reportedly refused to give up their orientations in the face of external standards, performance controls and the unsustainable pace of work (Hebson et al., 2003; Hogget et al., 2006; McDonough, 2006).

Commenting on teaching practitioners’ ability to accommodate and challenge policy changes, a range of models for practitioners’ actions have been identified (Stenhouse, 1975; Hoyle, 1986). Sachs (2001) proposed that the practitioner may sometimes exhibit an ‘entrepreneurial identity’ which is individualistic, competitive, controlling and determining in its approach. However, at other times, they may assume an ‘activist identity’, which has concern for the common good and aims at reducing inequality, exploitation and oppression (p157). Locke et al. (2005) suggested that the virtues that practitioners bring to their practice are significant. They are the key mediators for determining how organisational changes from the original ‘professional contextualist’ to a reformed ‘technocratic reductionist’ milieu in schools impact on the school ethos. These virtues determine whether

or not work with children will be driven by ‘moral purpose’ based on altruistic values. However, it is important to remember that teaching is a very personal experience where teachers develop intense relationships with their learners and colleagues, and there is extensive emotional labour in their work. This feature has guided a number of researchers to look at the affective responses of individual teachers to change (Nias, 1996), i.e. such studies have considered individual teaching practice. Teachers see themselves as embodying certain virtues, so when the legitimacy of relying on these virtues is under attack, the response is always affective as well as rational, with individuals possibly undergoing an identity crisis and therefore feeling vulnerable (Schmidt and Datnow, 2005).

It is at this micro level that this thesis will concentrate, because it is here that the professional resolution takes place for individuals. That is to say, this is the arena where the individual practitioner is constantly reassessing and renegotiating the inside-out / outside- in dimensions. At this level the dimensions of autonomy, responsibility and the nature of practitioners’ knowledge are in flux and are constantly reassessed and renegotiated. The flexibility of practitioners in their workplace supports the view that practice and practice methodologies are essentially dynamic, multi faceted and include practitioners’ orientations. From the above it would be reasonable to summarise practice as workplace practical knowledge and this knowledge is defined as that knowing which is subjective as well as rational. Workplace practical knowledge is tacit as well as explicit, embodied as well as externally situated, and over all, is undergoing constant construction under the pressures of inside-out and outside-in vectors.

## **2.11 Conclusion to chapter**

The above discussions have presented the macro and meso contexts to practice in public services, the micro work milieu and the factors contributing to practice. As indicated, opinions vary across the spectrum on whether it is inevitable that the practitioner, operating at the micro level, is absorbed into and adopts fully the forms of methodologies of practices, in which the calculative regime holds ‘economies of performance’ as central. The persistence of alternative ways of figuring out methodologies of practice suggests that more sustainable and more organic ways of working, the ‘ecologies of practice’ are present and possibly creating unresolved tension for practitioners.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Further Education lecturers' practice: the macro, meso and micro levels**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In chapter 2 the constituent elements of practice were discussed and a view of 'workplace practical judgement' (Hager, 2002) adopted as a suitable account of this complex dynamic. From a range of literature dealing with contemporary public services, it was clarified that for service workers, negotiations over their professional practice takes place at the macro, meso and micro levels. In this chapter, a similar tripartite structure is used to present the literature review of research on Further Education. Without establishing in this chapter the background macro and meso arenas for lecturers' practice, it is not possible to proceed to the context for lecturers, i.e. the micro arena. For this reason the chapter looks firstly at the context of the Learning and Skills Sector. Then the college is presented as the meso arena in which the external demands faced by the institution are negotiated. Finally, the lecturers' space is discussed at the micro level, i.e. lecturers negotiate the flux between inside-out 'ecologies of practice' and outside-in 'economies of performance'

##### **3.1.1 Chapter outline**

A review of literature regarding the macro level in Further Education is presented in section 3.2 and that for the meso level (institutional) is given in 3.3. Literature on the micro level is then examined in section 3.4, to show the college milieu that lecturers occupy. The case-study of 'Gwen' (James and Diment, 2003) is given to investigate whether one practitioner is able to reconcile the two competing practice vectors identified in chapter 2, i.e. 'economies of performance' with 'ecologies of practice'.

At each level, namely, macro, meso and micro, commentary is given on the issues of professional practice that were raised in chapter 2, that is, the knowledge, autonomy and responsibilities of practitioners in FE. On the basis of the literature reviewed here, this chapter develops the research framework and questions for this thesis. These are given in section 3.5.

### **3.2 Macro level**

Recent reforms to public services were described briefly in chapter 2, in order to demonstrate the macro level changes in ideology which have permeated welfare delivery in recent years. At the macro level, a general decline in teachers' professional control of the social and political agendas, in the face of reforms to education services, has been evident. In particular there has been a significant decline in their power to determine the nature and purpose of teaching (Busher and Saran, 1995; Esland, 1996; Hargreaves, 2006).

#### **3.2.1 FE lecturers' professional influence in the macro arena**

The influence of practitioners in defining the nature and purpose of further education has been unimpressive. In the case of university lecturers, professionals have enjoyed a clearly defined field in their research and have been recognised as specialised knowledge workers dealing with a respected corpus of knowledge. However, many researchers have pointed out that much university research is now granted on the basis that it contributes to improvements in the national economy and not for knowledge creation purposes (Nixon, 2001). As knowledge workers they have been able to protect their autonomy and self management in their chosen methodologies of practice, to some extent. Unlike university lecturers, amongst FE teaching staff, matters of recognised expertise and fields of dominance are more confused and thus less protected. One explanation for the incoherent and ineffectual response from FE lecturers to central government initiatives, at the macro political level, has been given as being due to: the diversity of staff interests, balkanisation of subgroups of staff i.e. there has been fragmentation of the workforce into interest groups, and lack of useful political lobbying by their collective representatives (trade unions) (Burchill, 2001). Similarly, according to Robson (1998), confusion over professional group cohesion left college lecturers in a weakened position for defending their practice and unable to exert social closure over any unique occupational territory. The lack of unity in identifying unique expertise in any one particular occupational field was similarly described by Clow (2001), when she found that many college lecturers exhibited diverse views as to their expertise: some saw themselves as imparting skills and roles from their previous careers in commerce or industry, others attributed their expertise to the fact they largely worked in an office, whilst others viewed their speciality as lying in their teaching qualifications and responsibilities towards students. Because of this diversity amongst lecturers and their inability to claim one unifying field of occupational expertise, it can be concluded that central government's degree of acceptance was limited in



regarding FE lecturers as expert professional knowledge workers. That is, they were not seen as being able to exercise self management effectively and be good decision makers in their practice. Consequently, the effectiveness of lecturers to dominate in the macro level agenda, concerned with the role of colleges and their practice, was minimal (Burchill, 2001).

The post compulsory sector developed rapidly in the 1990s and 2000s as the arena for the implementation of legislation for governments' 'Welfare to Work' agendas and managerial reforms in education institutions. Throughout this time, lecturers working in General Further Education Colleges (GFECs) have remained a significant part of the diverse Learning and Skills Sector (LSS) that deals with all non-school education and training, except for provision identified as higher education. Edward and Coffield (2007) have evaluated the recent trajectory of colleges, and indeed the whole LSS, as being distinguished by two factors: 'unprecedented and welcome levels of funding; and unrelenting, and generally less welcome, waves of change and turbulence' (p123). Set out below are some of the structural changes, innovations and initiatives that have shaped the macro legislative and policy environment. This discussion addresses, in particular, agencies and offices of the post compulsory sector, the LSS, particularly the LSC (Learning and Skills Council), to which GFECs are closely linked through: funding, audits and targets with regards to regional employment 'skills' needs.

### **3.2.2 The macro policy environment**

The post compulsory education sector, in which colleges operated immediately following incorporation, may be described as the embodiment of a calculative regime. Hogget described such centralised controls over decentralised operations, like in colleges, as having 'strong elements of self control with new and old forms of external control' (1996:419). The calculative regime established for FE colleges by central government took the form of colleges functioning as pseudo businesses. One strong external business imperative, derived from an acceptance of a 'survival of the fittest' approach by the government, was that GFECs should recruit students in increasingly higher numbers, in a competitive quasi-market. That is to say GFECs were to compete for students with local rival colleges and other training providers. At the corporate level, day to day operational and financial probity were the internal responsibilities of the CEO/principal and chair of the Board of Governors, who were bound by the moral obligation, 'self control', not to run

the college into bankruptcy. Any sense of corporate independence or freedom was curtailed by strong centralised surveillance and ‘old fashioned’ audit.

Following incorporation in 1992, the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) had responsibility for FE and sixth form colleges, whereas the Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) (established in 1990-91) ran government funded training and workforce development programmes and LEAs had responsibility for adult and community learning, along with various voluntary organisations. The principle government means of controlling colleges was through budgets: managing the numbers of funding units given for each student to the college and linking funding to performance indicators. Performance indicators were established on: student recruitment targets, improvements in outputs measured as student retention and achievement, and quality assurance through inspection of classroom teaching. ‘Convergence’ on the financial provision given to the different corporations enforced uniform levels of funding to institutions and compensated for the excessive funding that was previously enjoyed by some colleges under more generous LEAs.

A possible move away from managerialism has been analysed as a shift from a ‘funding’ to a ‘planning’ regime in the LSS (Steer et al., 2007). The New Labour government moved the emphasis for the LSS away from market driven competition to the new agenda of ‘lifelong learning’, based around widening participation and improving teaching standards in the LSS. This lifelong learning era, itself, was subject to change in 2004, which resulted in a reduction in the role of the national LSC office. Once again, in 2005 following the LSC’s ‘Agenda for Change’ document, focus shifted to developing local LSC partnership teams, geographically matched to Local Authorities, with the aim of being more responsive to localised employment skills priorities (Steer et al., 2007). The overall calculative regime, in which colleges operated, could not be described as being less rigorous and demanding. Thus, in spite of there being some ‘light touch’ controls other commentators have argued that there has been little change to the managerial project (Hodgson and Spours, 2006)<sup>1</sup>. Light touch inspection and audit were offered by the local LSCs for colleges who could prove that they were operating effectively and efficiently and were on schedule to meet their performance indicator targets. Similarly, there has been ongoing

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<sup>1</sup> As an example current targets for completion rates by students in GFECs are included in appendix 1.1

debate about whether the sector has to become more self regulating and less reliant on external forms of inspection. However, certain stakeholders questioned the ability of FE colleges to exercise high levels of probity, if they became self regulated. This concern follows a number of fraud cases of significant magnitude in the immediate post incorporation era (Stone, 2007).

In addition to the LSC, a formidable range of agencies has been involved in guiding developments in the sector. These agencies address specific areas of college delivery and include: the curriculum and teaching inspection authorities of Ofsted, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), and examination companies e.g. City and Guilds and Edexcel. Other agencies address college provision from an employment skills shortages perspective and to try to match the demands for employment related training in each geographical district, e.g. The Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, the Sector Skills Councils and Regional Development Agencies. The development of capacity in the colleges is the remit of the Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL), the Association of Colleges (AoC) and Quality Improvement Agency (QIA). Specific areas of learning needs are researched by the Learning and Skills Network (LSN). The LSN is a self financing research and training company that was the research branch of the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA), before the split to form the separate QIA organisation in 2006. All of these bodies monitor and help to steer the direction of colleges' operations.

One important factor, of note, is the role of colleges in their local communities. Whereas colleges may have been the site for technical or commercial training courses early in the post war era, the first moves into a more diverse range of courses occurred in 1970s, when colleges started in 'the business of education' (Avis, 1996; Ainley and Bailey, 1997). The initial signs of this new role for the GFEC arrived with the introduction of generalised employment related programmes for youths (sic), in an era of high unemployment. The Manpower Services Commission (MSC) commissioned programmes that could be seen as the pre-cursors to the agendas that were rolled out in the 1990s and 2000s of 'lifelong learning' and 'social inclusion', which were aimed at 14-19 year olds or 'hard to reach' adult learners (Richardson, 2007; Ainley 2007). The Special Temporary Employment Programme (STEPS) and Youth Opportunities Programmes/Youth Training Schemes (YOP/YTS) (1979) forewarned of the future developments in colleges. Stoney and Lines

(1987) pointed out that youth schemes introduced new developments to the GFEC such as: increased direct government funding (MSC) to colleges in place of LEA money, movement of the control of vocational curricula away from colleges to employers and positioned colleges in market type competition with other local 'training organisations' for youth training contracts. Most significantly, they brought a new type of student into college, studying curricula such as the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative/Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education (TVEI/CPVE) (1984-5). These student cohorts were regarded as needing teaching aimed at 'the improvement of young people's personal and coping skills as well as their intellectual and technical development' (Stoney and Lines, 1987:4). Although a far more diverse student body was introduced onto some college campuses, along with different systems of administration for the MSC funded programmes, it would appear that this new type of business was initially isolated and disengaged from the more established college faculties: 'The extent to which the ripple effects emanating from YTS have spread throughout the fabric of FE has been influenced by the degree to which the YTS schemes themselves have been restricted to particular enclaves in the college or dispersed throughout the departments' (Stoney and Lines, 1987:123). Many of the more academically focussed colleges, with little vocational provision, were not affected to any measurable extent by the MSC programmes. However, when incorporation occurred and the 'business of education' became pressing across the sector, the vocational agenda for the less able student became a universal concern and no college was allowed to opt out.

### **3.2.3 The national picture of the college workforce**

Regarding the workforce in colleges and the impact of the macro changes on the college as a workplace, Burchill estimated that between 1993 and 1998 there was a 27% reduction, in real terms, of central government funding to colleges, matched with a 30% rise in the student population (2001:149). A large proportion of the teaching staff reacted unfavourably to such pressures experienced in GFEC institutions that had to comply with administrative and legislative changes. Large numbers of staff left teaching in FE on incorporation, estimated at 7,000 to 10,000 out of a total full time staff body of 50,000 by Bell (1996). Record levels of industrial action were experienced across colleges during the conflicts over lecturers' new terms and conditions, the so called 'silver book disputes' (Togher, 1994).

Difficult industrial relations at the national level continued over ultimately futile attempts to re-establish uniform national pay bargaining, between the lecturers' union NATFHE and the employers. Once again, in 2002 industrial relations were very acrimonious and broke down, on this occasion, over lecturers' claims for parity of pay with school teachers. By 2002, the average salaries for school teachers were estimated by NATFHE to be 12% higher than those of comparable lecturers. Both sides of the dispute saw pay as a contributory factor to the issue of poor staff recruitment and rapid turnover of lecturing staff. Originally, turnover had been considered as offering an opportunity to clear out the "dead wood" by some college managements, post incorporation. This perspective was however replaced in the early 2000s with growing concerns over the workforce: the ageing of the GFEC staff population, the difficulties in recruiting and retaining well qualified staff, and worries about the effectiveness of the teaching and learning provided by the remaining staff (Kingston, 2002; BBC news, 2002).

In order to address these growing issues concerning the college workforce and hence, the quality of teaching practice in GFECs, the Quality Improvement Agency in Learning and Skills (QIA) was established. In 2006, when it was tasked with improving the performance of the sector, it took over some of the duties of the LSDA (formerly the Further Education Development Agency - FEDA) and the DfES Standards Unit. FEDA itself had grown out of the FE Staff Development College, based at Coombe Lodge in Somerset. This operated from 1962 until 1979 and was funded collectively from LEA contributions. However, it enjoyed little political recognition and was criticised as being 'amateurish' in its approach to research and building up an academy of knowledge on FE college lecturing (Cantor and Roberts, 1979). The white paper 'Success for All' (DfES 2002) mandated the government Standards Unit (SU) to support lecturers teaching in vocational areas. Moreover, for colleges that were not delivering at inspection, the DfES, via the SU, ensured that 'good practice' was available to be shared between colleges, through a framework of prescribed teaching materials. The QIA advised on the implementation of the revised initial teacher training (ITT) qualifications for Further Education lecturers, after the abolition of the FENTO standards, which had been produced by the earlier sector skills council (Lucas, 2004). Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK), the new sector skills council, ran the consultations on the workforce development strategy set out in the LSC's prospectus 'Agenda for Change' (LSC 2005). The Further Education Teachers' Qualifications (England) Regulations (DIUS, 2007) introduced: a mandatory qualification for a lecturer as Qualified

Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS), the requirement for staff to be registered and licensed to practice by the Institute for Learning (IfL) and 30 compulsory annual CPD days for each full time equivalent lecturer (FTE). After September 2007, unqualified FE lecturers were enrolled, part-time, on in-house Initial Teacher Training (ITT) programmes, set up by colleges to comply with these new statutory obligations (LLUK 2007). The research for this thesis was carried out just before the Workforce Reform Initiative was introduced and staff training and development processes had not accommodated any specific changes that were going to impact on ITT provision. Therefore, at this time staff had usually been voluntarily enrolled in ITT, which they juggled on an ‘ad hoc’ basis with their employment commitments. In addition, staff training days (CPD) were being provided by the college HR or Staff Development department.

As explained above, the macro arena for FE college practitioners saw mandatory top - down changes from central government into their field of practice and there was minimal consultation or reference to them or their representatives. Two dimensions of the macro agenda have changed the sector fundamentally: the introduction of the calculative regime, as colleges function as independent not for profit businesses and the widening of participation, so that a much broader set of students has to be included and then handled within colleges<sup>2</sup>. In chapter 2 under the discussion of the features of professional practice, three traits were highlighted: knowledge, autonomy and responsibility. These are used below to comment on the definition of practice that has emerged here i.e. that practice equates with delivery.

### **3.2.4 Macro perspective of lecturers’ practice: ‘practice equals delivery’**

Finlay et al. (2007) assessed the implications of macro policy for lecturers’ practice as severely negative. They summarised contemporary lecturers and their practice as follows: ‘teachers have come to be regarded as ‘deliverers’ of nationally produced materials through nationally identified processes, rather than as actors who develop important educational relationships with students, adapt specific practices to particular contexts and who are themselves capable of innovation’ (p150). This means that instead of achieving the role and status of an autonomous knowledge worker, the lecturer in the college setting apparently requires no capability other than that of delivering nationally approved teaching

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<sup>2</sup> This inclusion agenda continues. As an example, the current targets for participation rates are given in appendix 1.2.

materials, transferred to learners through mimicking nationally approved processes i.e. the lecturer is a deliverer. On reviewing the circumstances of lecturers, a similar conclusion was reached by Mather et al, (2007) when they found that the macro agendas for the LSS had the effect of moving 'the lecturing profession away from a craft system of production where lecturers, as subject specialists, had more autonomy over what was taught, towards a factory system of production' (p122).

In the LSS, if practice is synonymous with straight forward replication of tried, tested and approved 'means' of delivering information, it follows that 'delivery' will be the common goal in the development of lecturers as competent employees. Controls over training and ongoing practitioner development can, it is argued, show top down dictation of the content, nature and location of training, and moreover can be seen as prescriptive of 'the nature of professional knowledge, skills and values that student teachers are expected to have and are given to develop' (Furlong, 2000:6). As discussed in chapter 2, professional practice was once related to the practitioner's expertise and ability to use discretion in the application of this expert knowledge. This knowledge was to be used in a trustworthy altruistic manner and the responsibility of the professional was towards helping the clients and the public good. Reformed professional practice, it was argued in chapter 2, led to amplification of the meanings of knowledge, autonomy and responsibility, in order to fit in with the corporate work environment.

Practice as synonymous with delivery, is consistent with the hollowing out and reduction of teaching responsibilities and teachers' autonomy to an externalised set of skills or competencies. However, any tendency to reduce teacher training to a range of competencies has been widely criticised (Hyland, 1997; Tarrant, 2000). Competencies alone are considered too mechanistic and as leaving teaching practitioners without the necessary depth of knowing and capacity for the judgement that their role requires. Practice is degraded, because the notion of 'practice as delivery' excludes discretionary elements and any depth of understanding inherent in the tacit knowledge possessed by the lecturers. Benchmarking of explicit competencies and skills, however, is consistent with scrutinising and monitoring of performance under a calculative regime. For example the LLUK standards for lecturer training are benchmarked competencies that lecturers have to demonstrate and fine tune in a period of 'mentoring', after completing a course of instruction (LLUK, 2007). This process of 'objective' assessment of staff, based on

quantitative benchmarked performance indicators, does however facilitate the management of practitioners. Performance indicators assist management operations, it is argued, by removing 'subjective' elements from, for example staff appraisals, thus rendering assessments and decisions impartial, so that staff buy into them (Thrupp and Wilmott, 2003; Hoyle and Wallace, 2005).

Drummond (2003) and Trainor (2000) found that in contrast to what was expected, knowledge in calculative regimes has been rendered an exteriorised, codified asset and no longer 'sited' within the professional worker. As knowledge becomes gradually more codified, it becomes reduced in the calibre and richness that is found when it is supported by the tacit dimensions of knowing. The values inherent in practitioners' tacit understanding are removed from the repertoire of professionals and replaced with technical skills, achieved through simple craft training, which do not foster orientations towards flourishing or ethical understanding. They suggested this 'following a formula' to execute duties and achieve transparent outcomes, is a 'hollowed out' form of practice.

The reason for exteriorising knowledge appears to be that when this occurs, practitioners' knowledge can be made visible for managers to control. Green (2004) explained that exteriorising knowledge, mainly through codifying elements of labour processes that are explicit and ignoring or denigrating processes that are based in tacit dimension of practitioners' judgement, puts the emphasis on minimal duties and standard routines. As Green would argue, the right of managers to manage under this form of regime requires the atomisation of professionals' holistic performance into discrete quantifiable elements and that knowledge does not remain indwelt and intangible in the practitioner. In order to put performance back together, so that the organisation still functions, the codified parts are then reassembled into a new, controlled version of processes carried out by practitioners. When knowledge is mobilised as a means to manage practitioners, it undermines the previously protected domains in which practitioners had been trusted to exercise judgement and be responsible for their practice methodologies, when working with clients and their peers.

### **3.3 Meso level**

Having outlined the macro context, which was seen as placing on each college institution 'strong elements of self control with new and old forms of external control' (Hogget,



1996), this section moves on to consider the institutional, meso level responses to both central policy demands and environmental constraints found occurring within each college.

### **3.3.1 Meso level demands**

Firstly, in this section a brief discussion of the change to the GFEC's organisational design, since incorporation, is given and the post incorporation performance imperative is related to the intensification and extensification of work for lecturers. Then, Spours et al.'s (2007) model is used to show the process of translation of the macro level of decision making to localised demands at the college level. What happens to these demands when addressed by middle managers is initially discussed using Gleeson and Shain's (1999) concept of mediation, and subsequently more recent developments are considered. Finally, the implications for lecturers' practice in the meso 'melting pot', that is the college institution, are presented.

### **3.3.2 The organisational structure of the incorporated college**

The governance of incorporated institutions, under the panoply of macro legislative controls, was allocated to the Board of Governors, the chair of which guided the CEO/principal. Each corporation was made responsible for establishing a hierarchy of senior managers, supported by a range of business administrators, to manage the day to day internal running of the institution. The goal was to achieve efficient performance of the business in the light of local market factors, such as: the socio-economic needs of the local community, the range and abilities of potential students from the feeder schools and employers, and the financial wellbeing of the institution following the 'shock' of incorporation. As posited in the last chapter, at the meso level the transfer of complete financial responsibility to the institution had consequences for the college environment. In effect, it created a new order based around senior managers seeking value for money through the economy and the efficiency of provision, in place of a long established state welfare ethos that had previously been commonplace amongst practitioners and senior staff.

Devolving governance to the college institution to render it liable for its own affairs without interference from the LEA proved difficult (Cope et al., 2003). The Board of Governors became the direct employer of all staff, including the senior management and CEO/principal, with whom they had to work very closely and build a relationship of

accountability. The working relationship between the chair of governors and CEO/principal was found by Gleeson and Shain (1999) to be based on a special understanding, likened to a 'cult of the personality' and was not as robust as the co-operative relations usually expected in commercial enterprises or industry. The lack of any clear cut form of working relationships between chairs and principals still featured in research carried out in 2006 (Hill, 2006).

In 2001 the DfES revised governance structures under the Learning and Skills Act. Alongside the new Instruments and Articles, the college principals' professional association, the AoC, promoted the 'Carver Model of Policy Governance' (Carver, 2001). Under this, the chair and board handed over to the principal, by the scheme of delegation, the day to day resources management, leaving the corporate vision and long term business strategy under the aegis of the board. Gleeson and Shain (1999) posited that the continuing overriding concern for governors and CEOs was, at this time, constantly dealing with the many bureaucratic funding and accounting mechanisms, which were legally required for compliance under central government regulations. Cut backs to funding, post incorporation, led to years of financial uncertainty and chaotic college environments that contributed to an atmosphere that permitted a series of scandals involving fraud to develop in colleges. Chasing student numbers in the era of efficiency gains, compounded and embedded further the confusion that colleges faced about their function as a public service in their local communities: 'the fundamental problem remains that FE serves too many interest groups, and at the same time seeks to cater for an impossibly diverse clientele' (Gleeson and Shain, 1999a:559).

The central role of the LEA ended with incorporation, meaning that administrators in a remote bureaucracy were no longer involved in: dealing with recruitment and dismissal of college staff, participating in collective national pay negotiations, and enforcing national 'standardised' employment terms and conditions (Williams, 2004). College lecturers' pay bargaining structures were devolved to the CEOs and chairs of Governors, who as independent employers were free to negotiate more flexible lecturing contracts, which they saw as suitable for the circumstances in their particular institution. College based human resource departments that were introduced as a corporate strategy, were often used to cope with reduced funding for resources from the FEFC. These HR departments were deployed to streamline operations and where necessary, achieve efficiency gains from personnel

resources across campuses. Staff training and development (CPD) usually became the responsibilities of college HR departments.

### **3.3.3 The spirit of ‘being in business’**

The college as a site for lecturers’ practice has been discussed in terms of the conflict that incorporation created between lecturers and managers, and the deprofessionalisation of lecturers. It was argued, that as the result of the deskilling process there would be conflict between, on the one hand, lecturers trying to protect their autonomy and on the other senior managers attempting to exert control. As a consequence, this would lead to an over controlled workplace, if the managerial project was to succeed in the sector (Elliott, 1996; Randle and Brady, 1997). This swathe of literature did not fully address the inter- and intra-organisational variations caused by different managers or lecturers responding in different ways, when mediating the demands made upon them in the workplace. However, it has served the purpose of putting on record the real experiences of lecturers whilst the generic ‘calculative regime’ was being introduced to colleges.

The impact on lecturers of a college becoming financially self reliant within the spirit of being ‘in business’ was most noted in the content, demands and pace of work for staff. An important study of work intensification was carried out by Edwards et al. (2001), who discussed how the demands and pace of the job had been escalating. The situation was considered worse in some colleges than in others, and very much depended on the financial security of the institution; being positively correlated with the severity of the ‘FEFC efficiency gains’ demanded or high levels of ‘debt recovery’ that senior managers had to handle. Edwards et al. described how staff speeding up and rushing from one class, one lecture, one campus to another, led to an overall sense of ‘fire fighting’ and frustrations which had a negative impact on the individual lecturer’s sense of wellbeing.

Flexibility was once considered to be one of the best aspects of working in FE, namely the choice to take on areas of work or to develop a career as the individual saw fit and in a discipline or a role that he/she enjoyed. However, post incorporation a ‘negative flexibility’ was observed permeating the sector. This was typified by a contractually insecure, marginal body of casualised workers around a smaller permanent core staff, who were relied upon to shoulder much of the extensive administrative burden and to provide ‘sickness cover’ for absent colleagues. Furthermore, Edwards et al argued that another

negative aspect of flexibility related to the sense that college management relentlessly drove staff; lecturers were given whatever tasks required doing, regardless of appropriate training or qualifications. Some staff may have enjoyed the sense of urgency, being busy and being a jack of all trades, but essentially they had to 'fall in line and take what is on offer' (Edwards et al., 2001:388), if they wanted to remain employed.

Insight into the workload and range of job content for lecturers was obtained through the work-log research carried out by Avis et al. (2001). They found consistent patterns of excessive hours made up of 'conventional classroom teaching accompanied by onerous administrative burdens' (p76). This study demonstrated how a main grade lecturer timetabled for 23 hours teaching per week, reported an undertaking of 46.75 hours total work. This total was made up with other tasks, such as: non-timetabled student contact, form filling, meetings and marketing/recruitment. Lucas and Betts (1996) noted that incidental pressures from outside the classroom had multiplied vastly: the commitments to extra mandatory non-teaching sessions, attending marketing events, cooperation with feeder schools and parent liaison. This could be termed the extensification of the lecturer's job role. Alongside this process there was a concurrent intensification process. The latter included: declining guided learning hours (GLHs) per curriculum unit, rising numbers of students for which a lecturer had to take responsibility and increasing administration. This additional workload was implicit to newly negotiated contracts for a standard lecturing job, which were being rolled out throughout the sector, post incorporation. In other words, many of these intensification factors were not specified in the job contract. However, they were often identified in job specifications and this led to much interpretive disagreement between managers and rank and file lecturers (Bathmaker, 1999; Hill, 2000).

Voss et al (2004) in a more recent comparative survey, between private sector companies and FE colleges, noted that poor terms and conditions and difficult working environments for college lecturers continued well after the turmoil and financial hardships of the 1990s. Applying models of service management to colleges using data gathered in 2002/3, they described how 'private organisations out perform the FE sector in human resource management, employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction' (op. cit. p13). Whilst their study had anticipated that service quality in colleges would be low, consistent with the finding that staff members had low job satisfaction, surprisingly, this was not the case. They hypothesised two possible explanations particular to colleges. Firstly, it was argued

that customer expectations were very low to start with and thus any service quality outstripped customer expectations. Secondly, lecturers maintained a strong sense of duty and 'continue to deliver service despite low morale' (op. cit. p16). The situation that they described as typifying colleges, namely that of low staff morale, weak HRM and poor customer satisfaction, was attributed to three commonplace problems:

- Layering - this is where initiatives were laid on top of earlier initiatives, but none were completed in the colleges
- Monitoring - systems in the colleges initially appeared to be concerned with improving organisational performance, but were in fact for scrutiny and monitoring purposes only
- Bits and pieces - systems in colleges appeared to be without focus and were haphazardly introduced.

In relation to staff job satisfaction, survey data was triangulated by Voss et al. against qualitative interviews with lecturers. Issues identified by lecturers included: the need for greater two way communication with managers, lack of trust from supervisors, the sense that staff could not openly question things, low salaries, increasing workload with no rewards, and no recognition of work well done. Voss et al concluded that in colleges 'managers have chosen to invest more in quality procedures than in human resource practices.....This may have been the wrong choice' (op. cit. p18). It may be concluded that many of the aspects of lecturers' job intensification can be traced back to the administrative burdens of monitoring compliance with macro policy initiatives, and that these systems used for monitoring compliance were repetitive and lacked 'joined up thinking'. The pace of change and constant flow of initiative after initiative into the colleges, suggests that mediation of external demands appears to have been ineffective.

The research above, related to deskilling, has shown practitioners in some GFECs struggling to keep their heads above water in the hurly burly of college work and facing: intensification and extensification of duties, extension of management controls and fragmentation of their work processes. The workload of lecturers has risen, in that more hours are contractually required and as described above, the job is crowded with additional routine tasks and duties that do not count towards the teaching hours specified in the job contract. The range of duties has expanded to cover considerable amounts of administration, teaching and liaison. The training and development of lecturers has become an additional government requirement and thus a college management priority.

Another approach at the meso level is research that has looked at the internal operation of colleges and addressed relationships between key actors. There have been moves towards addressing the unique operations found in each college, and seeing practice as situated in this developing environment (Spours et al., 2007; Coffield et al., 2007). The performance imperative was signified in the newly formed corporations, by the fact that they were placed under the leadership of the entrepreneurial CEO, rather than the traditional head teacher/principal figurehead. Kerfoot and Whitehead (2000) commented on the effects of entrepreneurial business styles in colleges. Some colleges were described as forming 'playgrounds' for senior managers, who were defying 'personal weaknesses' and living out what was seen as an aggressive masculinity (Hughes, 2000; Leathwood, 2000; Shain, 2000). As a result, for some staff, who were no longer afforded arbitration or protection by the neutral LEA personnel officers, such 'bully boy' tactics and work related stress became commonplace: 'college managements have deemed it necessary, if not good practice, to place extreme pressure on staff and individuals. The justification of such actions appears to have been presented by managers in terms of 'the financial imperative', manager's 'right to manage' and 'survival of the fittest'' (Kerfoot and Whitehead, op. cit. p198). In contrast, the folklore of aggressive, intimidatory styles of management in FE colleges is countered by Lucas and Betts (1996), who indicated that a range of approaches to personnel existed under new leadership arrangements. A college could be based around HR 'development', a soft approach to staffing, where attention was largely focussed on human resource development. This emphasised the need to enhance the skills and capacities of the staff and to deploy people where best suited. The alternative, the HR 'management' approach, focused on the managers' control of staff and operational efficiency goals. The HR 'management' version delivered the harder of the two styles and was usually viewed as 'unsympathetic' by the staff members involved. The worst excesses of extreme macho management were publicly criticised in the Hodge Report (1998) and college managements were expected to work in more reasonable and accountable ways with their stakeholders, from this time onwards.

### **3.3.4 The translation of macro demands at the college level**

The college institution can be described as the place where critical factors have to be addressed. The managers have to deal with factors that impinge uniquely on the college

operation, using the resources available to them in ways that are consistent with macro policy demands, which in themselves as actions are fashioned by the college's position in the field of post compulsory education and training (PCET). Factors may be traced back to the college's location in the wider economic and social structures of its local region, such as: the nature and distribution of local industries and large employers, boom or depression in the local economy, and more specifically the competition it faces from other post 16 education providers, i.e. other colleges, schools with sixth forms, training companies and universities.

Adopting a Bourdieusian approach to the notion of the field, PCET can be considered as comprising numerous institutions all of which seek to maximise their dominant position in this specific world. The field is made up of those agents (colleges) who are dominant and those who are subordinate. They are ranked according to the outcomes of the relational position-taking between all the agents, many of whom never directly interact or communicate, but together constitute the field. This account of the dominant/subordinate relational positions relies on the 'underlying structuring principles' to order the field, that is to say, the field's specific 'values and markers of achievement' (Maton 2005:689). The issue of what is valued and regarded as the gold standard is can be open to contest in each specific field.

In PCET, what is the preferred gold standard form of capital is up for debate, whereas in higher education the notion of academic prestige as the marker of worthiness prevails. Academic capital, conflating the elements of the structures that reproduce the university system and scientific or intellectual reputation (Naidoo 2004) would appear to automatically denigrate and exclude the vocational, namely the skills and training for employment that many GFECs are tasked with delivering to young people. In the UK vocational education continues to be a poor relation in comparison to academic study and this is unlikely to change as higher education institutions continue to operate sifting and sorting processes that constantly reinforce 'social classification at entry and social classification on exit' and by so doing perpetuate wider social inequalities, such as those based on class (Naidoo op. cit. p459). However, FE colleges range in operation from those in which academic courses, usually 'A' levels, are their main provision through to others which deliver very few academic courses to a small minority of students and instead focus on various forms of vocational programmes. This suggests that gaining reserves of

academic capital are beyond many GFECs and for them involvement in other fields, perhaps for example through the decision to excel in corporate performance. Another possible option is to develop a reputation within the worlds of specific vocational trades (Hodkinson et al, 2007:27) as a substituted marker of achievement. This substitution is against the prevailing backdrop of universities and dominant social classes continuing to regard the worth of an academic education as far outstripping that of vocational training and regarding colleges dealing with vocational programmes, by definition, as second rate.

PCET, specifically the vocational courses provided by FE colleges, has been accorded the status of a second rate education that is considered as 'best suited for other people's children' (Richardson 2007:411). Whereas once training in a vocation may have been associated with a practical knowledge base that was valued in its own right, the recognition accorded to this has declined. The failure in the UK to develop forms of training that supported the status of manual work and trade skills has been traced to two specific problems. Firstly, with the decline of heavy industry and restructuring of the manufacturing base of the domestic economy, the state adopted a voluntarist role towards any obligation on the part of employers, with regard to employee skills, during the 1980s and 1990s. Secondly, the development of vocational education and training curricula that successfully combine appropriate college and workplace based knowledge has been piecemeal, constantly refashioned by central government and has not been particularly well engaged with by employers, their representatives, colleges and the young trainees themselves. Some vocations and their related curricula have fared worse than others in the face of these pressures (Young 2008:141).

From the above it may be the case that two competing notions for the PCET field's specific 'values and markers of achievement' are in tension: academic prestige and a practicable alternative gold standard. Maton suggested that when institutions operate strategically to take up and keep positions in their field, they can be considered as reflecting their relational position in that 'dominant agents tend to adopt conservative stances and dominated agents tend towards more radical stances' (op. cit. p690). Furthermore, some institutions that can exert their will can 'act in such a way as to allow for external determinants [to] be restructured, repelled or even reversed' (Naidoo op. cit. p467). This suggests that dominant institutions will work to reject externally instigated changes in order to preserve their position and protect their accumulated capital as the recognised and respected gold



standard. This can be considered in relation to GFECs, in that in some well positioned and academic capital rich FE colleges with long standing notorious reputations in the successful delivery of 'A' level courses, external demands may be handled with more leeway and not in simple compliance with the calculative regime being rolled out across the PCET sector. By contrast, other colleges who do not possess reserves of academic capital may seek to contest position-taking on the basis of their performance within the more recently introduced calculative regime, in effect valuing other forms of reserves in place of academic capital, such as physical infrastructure. This leads to the possibility that institutions in the same PCET field may respond in differently to macro policy objectives with academic capital rich colleges being able to rely on their educational reputations which other colleges are not able to do.

Considering colleges facing specific demands, Spours et al. (2007) assembled all the factors impacting at college level. Their diagram below shows 'policy levers', at the macro level, and of particular interest in this meso discussion, 'other factors' in the local pseudo-market in training and education, such as: regional targets in certain skill shortages as determined by the LSC, amounts of remuneration from meeting contracts with employers, and local employment conditions. This diagram effectively demonstrates the particular, unique constraints on each college which are structured by the market/field (see above). Constraints are consequently transferred into the internal operations of each institution. This means that, in the face of national policy directives, operating conditions are unique to each college and this 'uniqueness' has to be recognised when attempting to appraise colleges as sites for staff constructing their practice methodologies. Spours et al. locate this at the heart of their diagram.

**Figure 3.1.**

196 *K. Spours et al.*

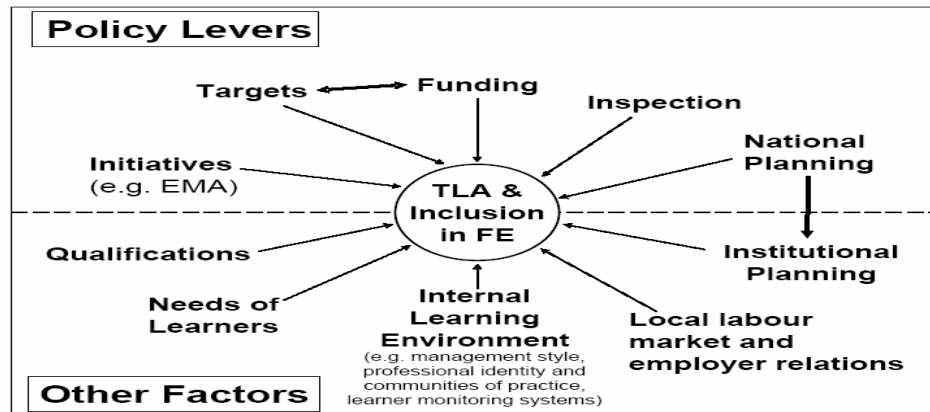


Figure 1. Factors influencing TLA and inclusion in eight FE sites: responses of interviewees

Factors affecting teaching learning and assessment (TLA) in FE colleges (Spours et al., 2007:196)

They used the term ‘translation’ to account for the ways in which college managers handle specific external demands, those originating at the policy level together with those factors specific to the locality. Translation allows for ‘a spectrum of constraint and agency, ranging from narrow or ‘constrained’ acts of translation under pressure from policy levers, to more ‘open’ ones, where institutional leaders have the ‘space’ to balance demands from the national and local levels, as they seek to make policy both manageable and understandable to themselves and their staff” (op. cit. p195). This means that different colleges will present different management regimes, as the backdrop for lecturers’ practice i.e. some colleges will be pressured environments, whereas others will be more relaxed places for lecturers to work in.

This interaction of demands and their negotiation into the college has consequences for practice, i.e. the outside-in vectors, which prevail in the workplace and around which practitioners have to negotiate. Significance is attached in Spours et al.’s model to the role of managers in taking responsibility for addressing the internal college milieu, by using their ‘space’. A similar issue has been raised by Martinez and Maynard, in relation to manager-lecturer trust when they discussed the ‘implicit or unwritten contracts’ (2002:74) between managers and lecturers. Space, in effect, gives managers the opportunity to control the ways in which central government policy initiatives and specific local factors

are echoed in the expectations made by the managers on lecturers. As suggested above, this can result in a workplace that has either positive or negative traits, i.e. demands are rendered manageable and understandable or alternatively can remain, to varying degrees, unmanageable and/or incomprehensible. The space through which external pressures can be rendered 'manageable and understandable' is the 'internal learning environment'. This space, according to Spours et al., was characterised through certain organisation specific arrangements:

- the extent of a college management's control over staff;  
e.g. the extent to which staff are made to comply with initiatives and follow up audits (such as a poor Ofsted inspection result) and deal with any subsequent problems.
- the style of the principal and senior management;  
e.g. also, the roles of the administrative staff and how the HR and Finance departments contribute to operations.
- the extent of team, lecturer professionalism and communities of practice;  
e.g. conditions in the discrete teams or academies/departments to which lecturers belong and how these relate to the overall organisation.

### **3.3.5 The roles of middle management**

From the above contributions to meso level research, it is posited that 'middle' managers play an important role. They are known by different titles across different colleges, for example: section leaders, programme leaders, deputy/head of department/team. Regardless of title, they have regular contact with rank and file lecturers, have to juggle many complex roles and are located at the intersection of the teaching staff and the college senior management, within the organisation. Duties include their:

- authority role - decision making about deploying work and budgets
- go between role - informing senior managers and then implementing college wide strategies through staff
- management role - meeting targets, auditing, managing the staff in the team
- leadership role (Barker, 2006).

The mediating effect of middle managers on the work environment was originally discussed by Gleeson and Shain. They argued that via these operational roles, middle managers negotiated the external macro levers and local factors. Some middle managers

filtered these levers and factors so that they consciously reworked ‘the pressures they dealt with from above and below, while at the same time maintaining a commitment to educational and other professional values, in support of student care and collegiality’(Gleeson and Shain, 1999:488). Such managers were described as showing ‘strategic compliance’, where they continued to operate within the corporate management hierarchy, whilst still protecting their staff from the worse aspects of the numerous and extensive demands that cascaded down from senior management.

More recent research looking at the level of middle management in the college hierarchy, has noted that since the mid 1990s, the roles of middle managers have become more intensified (Lumby, 2003; Leader, 2004). This is attributed to the recent developments in introducing more comprehensive management information auditing systems (MIS) and to trends in CEOs delegating budgeting to cost centres at lower tiers in the hierarchy i.e. to separate teams in faculties. The result of these changes in the middle managers’ remit has been to make many first level line managers far more aware of strategic planning and to get them more involved in implementing the business strategy of the corporation (Schofield, 2005). From this intensification of their duties, it may be hypothesised that contemporary middle managers may be less sympathetic to the needs of rank and file lecturers and more drawn towards enforcing the demands made by their senior management teams, than they were in the 1990s. Whereas in earlier times lecturers may have been afforded protection from the worst excesses by their line manager, the current focus has shifted to developing the ‘leadership skills’ of middle managers and to draw them closer to senior management, particularly when providing strategic leadership in the college: ‘leadership that is dispersed through team based interdependencies, fluid multi-directional social interactions and networks of influences’ (Collinson, 2006:7).

### **3.3.6 A college/meso level view of lecturers’ practice: ‘the learning professional’**

On reviewing the workplace circumstances of lecturers, a deskilling of practice was summarised by Mather et al (2007). They found that the macro agendas for the LSS had the effect of moving ‘the lecturing profession away from a craft system of production [and] towards a factory system of production’ (p122). Standardisation meant removing large areas of discretion from practitioners, as tasks are broken down into component sections and managers made responsible for decision making, planning and supervising. Standardisation that was initiated under incorporation had had severe consequences for the

commitment of lecturers to their incorporated college according to Randle and Brady (1997). Many felt alienated from their work and struggled to maintain relationships with students. Such accounts of the plight of lecturers are not unique amongst groups of professional workers. Parallels can be drawn with other groups of self managing knowledge workers undergoing proletarianisation of their labour processes. Derber (1983) suggested that proletarianisation was a common process observed amongst groups of professional workers and involved two issues. Firstly, professional workers lost control of the technical means of work, i.e. managers assumed the allocation of tasks and resources, and secondly, they lost control of tasks, i.e. they no longer had autonomy over decision making and exercising discretion in executing their duties. These two issues discussed by Derber summarise the degradation of professionals' work and are consistent with the accounts of deskilling of lecturers' work.

In the case of some professional practitioners, their autonomy may not have been degraded through organisational changes that can be termed proletarianisation, but the results on the individual of the degrading processes may have been very similar. Rubery (2005) and Lehdorff and Voss-Dahm (2005) focussed their research on human service workplaces and rather than considering the changes as proletarianisation, they argued that a degrading process of 'flexibilising' the work context has been occurring. This 'flexibilising' has seen the labour process retain a notional autonomy for practice, but in reality, practitioners have lost the resources and 'where with all' to make task related judgements. Permitted practice does not include attaining standards that are embedded in them from their sense of professionalism. Remaining true to clients' needs and to notions of the public good, requires the human service practitioner to be given adequate resources and supported in the work context. Without such support, the practitioner faces a crisis. It appears that the chief resource that the practitioner has available to call on to achieve the tasks, is his/her own time and energy reserves. It may be that effort contributed freely by lecturers is being used in a cynical and unsustainable fashion, through the pressurised ways in which the workplace is organised. Moldaschl (2002)<sup>3</sup> has suggested that this is a new form of (degraded) autonomy and not the same as proletarianisation. However, as this autonomy is

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<sup>3</sup> Moldaschl (2002) posits the dark side of giving practitioners autonomy. Autonomy, usually considered an asset as it motivates an individual to expend more effort, can be negative. It is a damaging source of work related stress if a practitioner is not provided with the means to meet the obligations and responsibilities that he/she perceives in the work situation.

coercive, it has, like proletarianisation, the effects of damaging the individual's physical and psychological wellbeing and undermining their commitment to the organisation.

In contrast to the deskilling debate, Guile and Lucas (1999) posited that there is a new negotiated form of practitioner emerging in the sector. The diverse range of work duties, the intensification and extensification of workload for the practitioner and the macro level policy changes that have led the GFEC to be more inclusive, could be described as a positive new departure. They found that the lecturer, who used to be tasked with 'curriculum delivery', has been replaced one who is now totally 'student focussed'. They argued that the lecturer has been recast as the 'learning professional', who handles teaching plus the college administrative duties and various other demands, whilst prioritising and meeting the needs of the learner. Five dimensions of lecturers' activities were highlighted by Guile and Lucas and were seen as central to the role of the new learning professional: supporting a more diverse student body, teaching transferable generic skills, accommodating overlaps between professional and managerial roles, delivering learning on and off campus, and introducing IT throughout the curriculum. It is interesting to note the list encompassed a broad range of lecturer activities some of which were 'first order', i.e. classroom teaching and pastoral care, and also some which were 'secondary order' activities i.e. carrying out procedures that provided the evidence that the first range of activities were being delivered (Lyotard, 1984; Ball, 2003).

Attaching the descriptor 'professional' to this new title, suggests that the role may include some elements of the autonomous knowledge worker that was perhaps once associated with the lecturer role. An alternative reading is that perhaps staff, as 'learning professionals', are forced to deal with the daily practicalities and organisational routines, rather than concern themselves with the moral complexities of pedagogy or student flourishing. Through summarising five straight forward features of what the contemporary lecturer 'does', lecturers' practice is revealed above as staff displaying capabilities and following routine working methods, for which they can be re-skilled on a regular basis. Practice emerges, at the meso (college) level, as a measurable performance carried out by individuals i.e. the 'learning professionals', who have to translate macro level initiatives into acceptable classroom practice.

The tasks of the lecturer encapsulated in the model of the ‘learning professional’ appear to be becoming wider and more elaborate. The type of knowledge that the lecturer demonstrates in the contemporary college workplace appears to be significant: fluency in ICT and familiarity with VLEs as applied to their discipline, fluency in basic literacy and numeracy has to be sufficiently strong to facilitate teaching in these, remaining up to date in a specific vocational/academic discipline, and handling students, managers and colleagues across a variety of settings. These may possibly suggest that the lecturers’ work duties are becoming more rigorous and require higher level abilities. Although the duties of lecturers may be becoming more technically complex and wider in scope, it has been argued that the extension of knowledge is not concurrent with any significant extension of autonomy. Autonomy might be an expected trait amongst highly knowledgeable practitioners (Brown and Lauder, 2006). However in the case of ICT technology, for instance, the knowledge of the lecturer is in fact tightly standardised by policy documents and codes of conduct that dictate the use of college networked systems for VLEs, lessons delivered on interactive whiteboards and communications by emails. Duties and tasks may entail a wider repertoire, but standardisation of duties to conform to specifications already set out or pre-determined across lecturers’ practice by the college, are common place<sup>4</sup>. Thus it would appear that the rules have been laid down within very tight parameters by college ICT policies and the degree of discretion for the practitioner has been severely restricted.

Therefore taking the example of ICT in the college, whilst the learning professional’s duties may appear to be more complex, the practitioner’s discretion over the ways in which ICT is in reality used or the choice of the lecturer not to use it at all, have been restricted: ‘we might expect to see workers’ autonomy or discretion downgraded or removed, while the complexity involved in their routines is maintained or indeed increased’ (Brown and Lauder, 2006:330).

### **3.4. Micro level**

Having considered the meso and macro levels, attention turns now to the micro level, that is, the level of practice which is the site of the empirical investigation for this thesis. It

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<sup>4</sup> See appendix 3 for an example of the ICT agreement that a practitioner agrees to abide by when using the ICT facilities in one of the case study sites (college A).

would be impossible to understand this micro level without the background that has been developed for the previous two levels. In a number of recent studies of colleges, lecturers were observed to negotiate or contest the macro definition of practice and not necessarily conform to the notion of delivery e.g. Spours et al. (2007) and Coffield et al. (2007). In this section on the micro level, examples are given of practice methodologies being figured out. Accounts are presented of practitioners as they work to achieve a reconciliation of their inside-out orientation towards student flourishing and outside-in constraints, that are the calculative economies prevailing in their college milieux (James and Diment, 2003; James et al., 2007).

### **3.4.1 The 'lecturer's space'**

As established in the previous sections, the FE lecturer workforce is made up of a very diverse group of people. Teaching in a college, for many entrants, is not an intentional career move, unlike the vocation of a school teacher. Many such novices, until compulsory initial training was recently introduced, picked up the tricks of the trade as they went along, with little emphasis placed on formal pedagogical knowledge or on achieving a teaching qualification. This learning by doing explanation of lecturers' practice is consistent with the situated learning approach adopted by communities of practice discourses that account for practice, as emerging from peripheral participation in the ongoing milieu of the workplace (see chapter 2). Participation leads to the individual maturing into a fully competent and accepted member of the community, who is recognised as such by colleagues. The concept of a community of practice and the suggestion that one can exist for novices to participate in is doubted in the context of FE, because of the calculative regime that has come to permeate the sector. Because the macro definition sees practice as a measurable technical performance, there is no basis for individual relationships to develop to form a community (Gleeson et al., 2005). Organisational structures and the notorious lack of stability in college corporate operations, work against the formation of trust-based relationships and long term collegiality amongst lecturers. Research in other fields of employment has queried the adequacy community of practice discourses in accounting for how individuals, from a greatly varied range of backgrounds, have been transformed into expert practitioners (Mutch, 2003). The degree to which practitioners adopt the espoused ways of working in the community has been the main point of



contention and thus practice, it is posited, cannot be a uniform entity across the community.

Although the specific concept of a community of practice appears to have had little relevance to understanding lecturers' practice, a contextualised approach was adopted by the Transforming Learning Cultures in FE research project (TLC) that was carried out between 2001 and 2005 and funded by the ESRC. This body of research sought to examine the multifaceted and complex dimensions of teaching and learning practices within the context of the sector, through the lens of cultural theory of learning. The different learning cultures that emerged in different locations and at different times were indicative of the unique 'social practices through which people learn[t]' (James et al., 2008:4). The TLC researchers considered that practice could not be reduced to 'technical' procedures, as lecturers' managers' and students' work was specific to each site and the actors involved. However, some common characteristics of the general learning culture of the FE sector could be identified and the following conclusions could be drawn: the tutor was very significant in learning, different courses and programmes enjoyed different status within the sector, the sector suffered from unstable funding and a fierce auditing regime and that the sector was subject to policies and agendas imposed on it from the macro level (Biesta et al., 2008: 145-146). Moreover, this appreciation of the situatedness of pedagogy and practices that had been observed in a variety of FE institutions allowed the researchers to develop a range of sophisticated suggestions for improving teaching and learning. More importantly, as the TLC project was carried out over a number of years and was the largest study to date of the FE sector, the outcomes facilitated the development of a new stream of literature. This advanced beyond the deskilling debates often seen in the earlier literature concerned with practitioners' work and the impact of the calculative regime on FE. It opened up for discussion the proposition that actors situated in their college contexts were negotiating their roles in specific ways. Some of the reports and observations from the various separate investigations undertaken for the TLC project are commented on in the following discussions of the 'lecturer's space'.

### **3.4.2 Pedagogy and lecturers**

The nature of the pedagogical dimension to practice remains a key subject of debate (Avis, 2000; Lucas, 2004). In other words, are FE lecturers teachers? It is generally accepted by

much of the literature on pedagogy that for an individual to be classified as a teacher there needs to exist the dimension of flourishing of that individual and the students (Carr, 1996; Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005; Young, 2008). The FE lecturer role, prior to incorporation, was generally considered to have been sufficiently flexible to allow for such flourishing to take place (Richardson, 2007). However, Gleeson et al have argued that the post incorporation college management structures and calculative regimes have led a reinterpretation of the notion of flourishing for students and a denial of its requirement for the teaching staff: 'the idea that there exists a 'community of practice' in FE is a misnomer' (Gleeson et al., 2005:455).

This lack of strong pedagogic direction, in the context of further education, has been seen as contributing to a therapeutic ethos, which has led to the outcome of student containment by, on the whole, only supporting fragile or marginalised individuals' self esteem. Therapy, with the lecturers acting as therapists, has replaced more demanding curricula based on 'challenge, risk-taking and empowering others' (Ecclestone, 2004:133). Where challenging young people's perceptions was once permitted, nowadays it appears to be out of favour, but as Hayes (2005:6) has pointed out 'challenging young people's ideas is not a close relative of child abuse' and should not be seen in such a negative light. Although few would argue that the pre-incorporation era were halcyon days, this turn to therapy, particularly on vocational courses, fails to provide opportunities for addressing the fundamental issues of inequality and social injustice faced by these groups of learners (Avis et al., 2002).

The difference in novices and experienced lecturers' orientations towards the meaning of the enablement of 'students' flourishing' was identified by Avis et al. (2002). Trainee novices were keen to work with students who had been labelled as failures in schools, in order to offer them better opportunities in life. However, the realities of their classroom experiences often worked against this orientation. More problematically, novices saw themselves as facilitators of learning and not instructors or teachers. Avis et al expressed concerns about this facilitating orientation, because it meant that students' short-comings in learning, i.e. failure on a course or dropping out, became the main purpose of novices' teaching. In other words, lecturers were tending to abnegate their proactive pedagogical role. Such interventions could be considered as disempowering and as creating dependencies, resulting in knowledge of the discipline becoming diluted. Denying students

knowledge was effectively taking away from them any meaningful flourishing experience. This tendency towards such disempowering interventions by novices was very likely to occur, as they usually colluded uncritically with performance driven calculative missions: ‘notions of accountability, performance indicators, and a system of appraisal, key facets of a lecturer’s life, all figure in this process and lead to the development of a constellation of ideas that help to shape a common sense of pedagogic relations’ (Avis et al., 2002:190).

Another contrast between experienced and novice lecturers concerned the attitude towards non-teaching duties and this suggested there were different notions of professionalism between these two cohorts of lecturers. Whilst novices were convinced that administrative duties were part of the teaching process, that is, essential to monitoring students’ progress to improve the learning experience, the established staff disagreed. They largely found bureaucracy a burden that took them away from their ‘real’ teaching duties. This negative view of the intensification and extensification of the workload, expressed by experienced staff, led many novices to criticise their experienced colleagues as ‘incompetent, out of step with the times and reflect[ing] an ageing workforce that cannot cope with the thrust of modernisation’ (Avis et al., 2002:195) .

Andrews et al. (2007) criticised recent CPD programmes for being bereft of serious pedagogical content. Research projects that gave lecturers the opportunity to focus on pedagogy were seen to improve the situation: ‘the state of continuing professional development in post-compulsory education is so poor that almost any intervention that respects teachers and takes them seriously might be effective in re-energising a sense of professionalism’ (p22). Through participating in the research projects, lecturers were described as trying ‘to engage students with more sustainable forms of learning than they, as teachers, had come to feel were possible’ (op. cit. p21). Reconciling of the economies of performance (i.e. the constraints posed by the calculative regime of the college) with the practitioners’ ecologies of practice (i.e. their orientations to create flourishing amongst their students and for themselves), apparently happened when project participants found ‘they could be critical of the ways in which targets and resource constraints undermined their practice, while not feeling so disempowered by the pressures they were under’ (ibid). In this research, it appeared that flourishing aspects of practice were ignored by the training provided by those colleges that tended to focus on macro arena initiatives, legislative changes and work duties that were not directly involved with learner engagement. These

lecturers reported that prior to being involved in these research projects they had little pedagogical training and understanding, to enable them to understand and carry out effective teaching. In general, they stated that they learnt by trial and error, with little effective input on specific problem solving from experienced practitioners. Moreover, this was also the case for those lecturers who had undertaken ITT qualifications ‘all but three of the 49 (participant) teachers learned a great deal about formative assessment, changed their practices and felt empowered to do so’ (ibid).

By contrast, in spite of what may be assumed to be the widespread, impoverished pedagogical foundations of CDP in colleges, Coffield et al. observed ‘many examples of staff using their professional judgement to create learning cultures in which learners accustomed to failure could learn to thrive’ (op. cit. p731). Also, within their particular college context, some lecturers were ‘still feel[ing] there is space for professional judgement in how they teach, although they have to work within the constraints of the curriculum, the requirements of the awarding bodies, meeting targets and passing inspection’ (Coffield et al., op. cit. p732). Clearly, there is an inconsistency that needs further investigation.

### **3.4.3 Compliance and/or resistance by lecturers?**

Compliance and resistance are two alternative positions that have been adopted by practitioners, when all three levels, i.e. macro, meso and micro bear down on the lecturer and require resolution for day to day functioning. These have lain between the extremes of staff who flourished in the managerialist college milieu, to those who felt they had to leave. The responses observed by Mather et al. (2007) amongst practitioners included: ‘ingenious methods of compliance by, for example, bending (not breaking) financial rules’ (p738). Other strategies to resist intensification and extensification of tasks included: subverting official work requirements, manipulation of bureaucracy (avoiding lesson planning, quality assurance documentation), finding informal support amongst colleagues and resorting to some absenteeism. Stronger forms of resistance were rarely reported by college staff, because of their profound sense of obligation and service to students. Lecturers were in a double bind: wishing to protect themselves from strategies designed to make them work harder and their orientation to educate their students, who would be the primary ‘victims’ of any acts of resistance, if they refused to spend time with them or carry out administrative processes. This situation echoes Moldaschl’s (2002) notion of ‘coercive

autonomy', where the good will and flexibility of practitioners is readily available and is subsequently exploited (section 3.3). High degrees of commitment to students have frequently been remarked upon as the fundamental orientation for college lecturers and thus helps to explain their attachment towards supporting their students, regardless of the personal cost: 'The embodiment of public service ethos within the labour process is a defining feature of much public service work and these lecturers appear to be no exception. They do the work because as one [interviewee] commented, "It's me standing in front of the students and I want them to do well. That's what it's all about" ' (Mather et al., op. cit. p119).

#### **3.4.4 'Gwen': an example of a lecturer negotiating her 'space' for practice**

Having reviewed the more recent literature on practitioners as individuals located in their college site, this section moves on to look at instances of lecturers, as individuals, going through the processes of negotiating their particular college 'space' (Coffield et al. 2007), or their college 'internal learning environment' (Spours et al., 2007). This is so as to examine the flux between the inside-out and outside-in vectors, as the ongoing construction of practice (see chapter 2). A case study (James and Diment, 2003) of a lecturer's existence and her trajectory of negotiation are discussed below, in order to draw together the outside-in and inside-out vectors and comment on the journey that shows her constructing her practice methodologies. This is one of very few case studies (e.g. Colley et al. 2007; James et al., 2007) that have attempted to understand the notion of practice as a flow, where constant adjustments are being made in order for an individual practitioner to function in a changing environment.

James and Diment (2003) presented the case of Gwen, who was faced with having her usual style of teaching through 'face to face contact' removed. This scenario tells how, due to budget cuts in her college department and the introduction of more online teaching, paid informal coaching opportunities were being withdrawn. Only contacts for formal assessments were possible, within the price of the contract, between the college and the students' work place providers. The personal narrative highlighted the calculative regime of the meso context of the college, bearing down on this one practitioner. Gwen's initial response to the departmental cut in resources (contact time) was to give her own time and energy to students, even though this effort was not recorded, by either the college or the students' employers: i.e. her 'underground working.' The eventual outcome was inevitable;

Gwen left her job, disillusioned and unable to cope after battling for some months with her growing sense of letting down her students. The high cost of this was shown by her declining physical and mental health. Perversely, the flexibility demonstrated by the lecturer, seen in unpaid extra hours with the students, for a time, maintained the rates of student retention and achievement, so that in turn, the college retained its good reputation with the work place providers.

The constraints of this college's particular financial 'crisis', led to the college managers cutting allocated teaching time and introducing more distance learning. For Gwen, this situation presented a fundamental challenge to her orientations. Initially, she refused to let go of her commitment to doing a good job for the students, by resorting to underground, 'covert' teaching. James and Diment suggested that the lecturer's personal trajectory (habitus) of disappointing personal experiences of schooling, coupled with her own interpretation of what her job was, motivated her to resist the changes and to continue with her preferred ways of working, that she regarded were in the best interests of her students. To point out to the lecturer that she was personally paying the cost through exhaustion, failed to recognise the full depth of the assault on the lecturer's orientation. The process of negotiating practice through which Gwen came to realise that her 'cherished values' were no longer congruent, in reality, given all the external constraints she faced, was painful and complex. The story clearly accounted for Gwen's practice, as she was reconciling or failing to reconcile performance constraints with her practice ecologies. Her negotiation and reconciliation processes were complex, multi faceted and dynamic. Moreover, her narrative provided an insight into a lecturer as a situated practitioner and as an experienced individual, who was constructing her workplace practical judgement through an evolving and highly personal set of experiences, as she sought to resolve the critical tensions in her job.

All three levels of the components that interact to produce practice in the FE college have now been discussed, that is, the participants have been introduced to the stage - the 'ba'. Furthermore, the dynamic relationship of these three levels that impact on the practitioner has been presented. Two types of differences between practitioners have been identified: firstly, variations or differences between college institutions and secondly, practice variations between novice and experienced lecturers. Obviously this practice cannot be viewed in isolation from the mission of the college, i.e. the meso level, and the managers'

perspectives which focus on ‘economies of performance’ need to be included alongside lecturers’ ‘ecologies of practice’. This thesis has no interest in the ways managers perform their roles, but it does view the need to obtain managers’ orientations on lecturer practice as an essential component of enquiry.

### **3.5 The research focus and framework**

The research literature on the GFEC has shown that constant macro policy changes originate and are driven downwards from central government via its agencies, into the meso college arena where principals and managers respond to these and local demands. Lecturers are described in some of the literature as situated at the centre of this, in effect, reconciling on the one side the external demands of their college milieu ‘economies of performance’, and on the other, their own orientations towards practice, ‘ecologies of practice’ (Coffield et al., 2007, Spours et al., 2007). Some of the literature on the labour processes of lecturers has shown that their job entails a wide range of routine skills, includes many repetitive duties and that they often feel unsupported and short of time to do their tasks well (Burchill, 2001; Voss, 2004; Mather 2007). The formal in-house ITT and CPD programmes have also been viewed as failing to offer staff opportunities for the development of their pedagogical understanding (Ecclestone, 2004; Hayes, 2005; Andrews et al, 2007), because addressing complex ethical and academic ideas is no longer seen as integral to the training of lecturers. This study aims to illuminate how lecturers are constructing ways of working, so as to handle these tensions in their practice.

The orientations and understandings that individuals have about practice have been effectively captured through research that takes a qualitative approach (Gleeson et al., 2005; Colley et al., 2007; James et al., 2007). This was achieved by using case-studies of individual practitioners situated in their colleges, such as the scenario given in James and Diment’s (2003) account of Gwen’s narrative. This study thus proposes to adopt a qualitative approach to the study of lecturers’ practice, using small cohorts of staff from case-study colleges. Case-studies will permit investigation of experienced lecturers’ and novices’ orientations towards practice; what they consider practice and its purpose and also illustrate how they learn their practice methodologies. Managers’ views will be sought on these points. The respondents will be contextualised in their workplace environments and through the device of vignettes, examples of issues or workplace events which have to be

worked through and reconciled, will be used to present these actors 'in situ', negotiating practice.

Earlier in this chapter, a definition of lecturers' practice, at the macro level was developed as 'equalling delivery'. Managers at the meso/institutional level may be following this discourse, relying on a simplified notion of lecturers' practice as delivery of their teaching programmes, and thus dealing with them as 'learning professionals' (see section 3.3). This managerial definition permits little room, if any, for other interpretations to the standard delivery of 'off the shelf' lessons and compulsory subject materials. Moreover, alongside this 'delivery', lecturers are also expected to perform an extensive range of administrative and bureaucratic tasks, as part of their job specification. At the college sites, managers' perspectives will be investigated to see whether they conform to this view of lecturers as 'learning professionals' and the discourses of practice concomitant with it. Tensions may arise if lecturers in these colleges are creating and developing their own practice methodologies, which do not align with their managers' views of what a 'learning professional' should be doing.

The focus of the fieldwork will be to explore lecturers constructing practice methodologies and to see how they understand the dimensions of autonomy, knowledge and responsibility in carrying out their duties. It is anticipated that their practice is negotiated against the backdrop of the calculative imperatives and constraints embodied above in the 'learning professional' performance model of the ideal lecturer in the incorporated college. A further point of comparison that needs to be investigated lies between novices and experienced lecturers. This is prompted by the literature that noted different orientations towards practice and related tasks, according to the relative lengths of service of members of staff. To clarify these research aims and to prepare for the next chapter, i.e. chapter 4 on the methodology of this study, three research questions are stated below.

### ***Research Question 1***

Lecturers' practice has been posited as the on-going reconciliation of their inside-out orientations, namely their 'ecologies of practice', with the outside-in context, namely the college's 'economies of performance'. This question addresses the three constituents of practice from the point of view of the practitioner.



***RQ 1:*** What do autonomy, responsibility and knowledge mean for the FE lecturer in his/her practice?

***Research Question 2***

Each college's management will have an understanding of lecturers' workplace practice based, to a large extent, on their supervisory position in the organisation. Moreover, a performance driven interpretation of lecturers' autonomy, responsibility and knowledge, is consistent with managing and organising a college as an incorporated business. The second question addresses how managers, working in the calculative regime, view lecturers' practice.

***RQ 2:*** What do managers consider autonomy, responsibility and knowledge should be in lecturers' practice?

***Research Question 3***

The deficiencies of formal training provision in the sector have been noted. When CPD is motivated and driven by the calculative regime of the college, lecturers have been offered CPD which supports the meso and macro agendas and on many occasions that does little to further personal development. However, in daily situations, practitioners continue to operate and work goes on. It is not apparent how and from what sources lecturers manage to develop their knowledge, autonomy and responsibility. This third question, therefore, investigates this point.

***RQ 3:*** How do lecturers develop their practice?

**3.6 Conclusion to the chapter**

This chapter has outlined the macro policy environment, in which GFECs operate and has reached the position that each college is a unique institution. In handling local and macro demands placed upon it, each college has developed its own approach and structures. Through out the chapter, however, it was evident that underpinning this 'uniqueness' was the calculative regime enforced by central government controls over the whole sector i.e. audit and performance monitoring.

Having located the lecturer within this backdrop, the research framework has been established. The research focus is to investigate, by means of a qualitative approach, the issues surrounding the construction of practice in the college, namely, how practitioners come to understand autonomy, responsibility and knowledge in their work. The next chapter sets out the methodology for the investigation.

## **Chapter 4: Methodology**

### **4.1.1 Introduction**

The last chapter reviewed some of the literature concerning lecturers' work and the context of the GFEC as the site for their practice. From this the framework for this study was developed and the research questions defined. These questions are:

***RQ 1:*** What do autonomy, responsibility and knowledge mean for the FE lecturer?

***RQ 2:*** What do managers consider autonomy, responsibility and knowledge should be in lecturers' practice?

***RQ 3:*** How do lecturers develop their practice?

This chapter outlines the methodological approach and procedures taken to explore these questions in the field.

### **4.1.2 Chapter outline**

This chapter presents the research methodology for this study. Section 4.2 briefly describes the methods used in previous studies on workplace learning. Section 4.3 introduces the qualitative approach to research which is adopted in this study, because it permits rich contextualised accounts of the phenomenon of practice. The research design is given in section 4.4. As this study probes the workplace lives of participants, ethical issues need to be considered; these are discussed in section 4.5. The operationalisation of the theoretical dimensions of practice, namely the concepts of autonomy, responsibility and knowledge are considered in section 4.6. Fieldwork processes are described in section 4.7 and how the collected data was analysed is described in section 4.8.

## **4.2 Previous research on workplace learning**

Initially, it is useful to outline some of the previous research approaches to workplace learning, both in general workplace learning literature and that of the FE sector. Much of the investigation into learning by employees has been from a quantitative perspective that has analysed large scale survey data (Felstead et al., 2004; Gaillie et al., 2004). However, to investigate contextualised workplace learning, such as that taking place in communities of practice within organisations, a more qualitative perspective has been preferred, using either semi-structured interviewing (Eraut et al., 1999) or observation techniques (Seeley

Brown and Duiguid, 1991). The literature on FE lecturers' learning at work has similarly followed both quantitative and qualitative lines of inquiry. Within the FE sector, limited national data on the number of trained staff is provided by the sector skills council Lifelong Learning UK. Research into lecturers' training for work has measured the number of qualifications held and time spent on training (Lucas, 2004). Under a more qualitative approach, studies of communities of practice in colleges (Avis, et al., 2002) have relied on semi-structured interviewing. More in depth research has employed: reflective commentaries written in the form of diaries, personal work logs and in depth interviews. These have been the preferred strategies to understand the working lives and the practices of individual lecturers (Colley, et al., 2007; James and Diment, 2003). After consideration of the range of research methodologies used in previous studies, it would appear logical to adopt a qualitative approach to the understanding of practice as a situated phenomenon, for this study.

#### **4.3 Research paradigm and strategy; introducing the qualitative approach**

Robson (2002) stated that a research study has to have the purpose of contributing to knowledge and in this vein identified four possible means of contributing: explanation, exploration, description and emancipation (p61). A study may combine several of these or have just one main focus. This thesis examines the construction of practice by lecturers, as this phenomenon has received little attention from researchers; this current study would be categorised as being exploratory. It has been argued that an approach well suited to comprehending the, as yet, little known, is one based in the qualitative paradigm, that is, 'qualitative data often have been advocated as the best strategy for discovery, exploring a new area, developing hypotheses' (Miles and Huberman, 1994:10). The qualitative paradigm originates from the position that all phenomena are socially constructed and the role of the researcher in the study is to, 'understand the multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge' (Robson, op. cit. p27). The aim here is to gain a tentative insight into the meaning of lecturers' practice, as defined by the dimensions of their autonomy, responsibility and knowledge (see chapter 3).

A qualitative inquiry can call upon many methodological approaches, for example: ethnographic case studies, participation, qualitative interviewing (unstructured or semi-structured interviews and focus groups) and language/discourse analysis of conversation

and of texts (Bryman, 2004:268). There are significant strengths offered to this study by employing a qualitative approach, as any insight into the phenomena under investigation comes from the data being grounded. That is, data are collected by the researcher in the field and he/she studies the phenomena in their natural context to allow for the meanings and subjectivities of the respondents to be captured.

Grounded theory, as an established qualitative methodology and research approach, seeks to reach an understanding of the world of the actors (Legard, Keegan and Ward 2003; Pidgeon and Henwood 1997). This is achieved by starting with the phenomenon under focus and through an inductive process allowing for concepts to emerge through different stages. The researcher repeatedly travels backwards and forwards between the data and artefacts that have been collected in the field and the analytical process of coding: 'coding for emerging concepts (from the data) is done by close scrutiny with the intention of developing core categories that account for most of the variance in data' (Douglas 2003:48). From the patterns that become evident in the categories, conceptual theory is developed regarding the phenomenon that is being researched.

There are advantages in adopting the research approach of grounded theory for this study. Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggested that qualitative fieldwork should fit with the preferred style of the researcher, as he/she becomes the main tool of investigation. With many years of contact with the world of FE, carrying out interviews allows this researcher to capitalise on her considerable insight into the college as an organisation and the working lives of lecturing staff. Moreover, through following this approach data can be amassed over a substantial time period, involving several visits to the field. This flexibility, regarding the timing and scheduling of visits, allows for data collection to be sensitive to unforeseen subject matter and thus be able to accommodate such changes into the research processes (Robson, *op. cit.* p87). By contrast, quantitative research cannot capture such digressions, as it is rarely structured to incorporate follow up enquiries. Finally, grounded research produces an account that is rich in detail and shows the complexities of social situations. These accounts are 'vivid, nested in a real context and have a ring of truth that has a strong impact on the reader' (Miles and Huberman, *op. cit.* p10). Given the clear advantages of this approach in finding out the meanings and understandings held by people in the 'real world', it would appear to be the most appropriate procedure for this thesis investigating the 'real world' of lecturers.

As Seale (1999:3) has argued, there are competing definitions of what can be termed qualitative research and moreover what is considered to be good qualitative research, is also debatable. For instance, on the one hand, qualitative research can include studies that are very loosely designed and rely entirely on concepts to emerge, whereas on the other they can include those studies that are slightly more fixed from the outset. This variation emphasises the divergence between different schools of thought regarding grounded theory that have emerged over time. Although it may be agreed that grounded theory is a ‘theory that was derived from data systematically gathered and analyzed through the research process’ (Strauss and Corbin 1998:12) the degree to which researchers should initially focus their study has been a subject for debate. Those that advocate following the guidance of Strauss and Corbin are willing to allow researchers to be more prescriptive over the methodological stages through which phenomena are analysed. With this approach coding can be more focussed around a particular research issue that has been selected in advance (Douglas *op. cit.* p49, Bryman 2008).

There are strong reasons here to accept a degree of realism and to use a slightly pre-structured focus, guided by the pre-existing literature. This is because, firstly, it is unrealistic for qualitative researchers to commence a study, whilst claiming to be totally uninformed about the field: ‘something is known conceptually about the phenomenon but not enough to house a theory’ (Miles and Huberman, *op. cit.* p17), and it is best to put this existing knowledge to use. Secondly, the researcher needs to avoid being swamped by data emerging from the interviewees, as could be the case with an unstructured framework. This can be prevented by using a slightly pre-structured framework: ‘tighter designs also provide clarity and focus for beginning researchers worried about diffuseness and overload’ (Miles and Huberman, *ibid.*). Consequently, this researcher has opted for this methodology to undertake her fieldwork and analysis.

#### **4.3.1 Research design**

As implied from the above, the pre-structured qualitative approach allows the researcher to use case-studies, where interactions can be explored to produce a rich account of participants’ insights and experiences. The unit of analysis in this study is the individual college lecturer, who negotiates his/her practice methodologies in the context of the college

milieu. This is consistent with revealing the phenomenon of practice, which occurs when the lecturer carries out his/her role as a practitioner within the site of the college. That is to say, practice can only be investigated in the human context.

#### **4.3.2 Multiple cases**

In spite of the richness of the data that is generated by an in depth study of the single case, i.e. one individual, Miles and Huberman have suggested that it is advantageous if more than one case-study, i.e. more than one individual, can be researched. This is because it enhances the understanding gained: ‘multiple cases offer the researcher an even deeper understanding of processes and outcomes of cases, the chance to test (not just develop hypotheses), and a good picture of locally grounded causality’ (op. cit. p26). In this study multiple individuals are interviewed, consistent with the advice of Miles and Huberman. However, given the diversity between institutions within the FE sector, described in chapter 3, it is argued that studying a number of FE institutions would provide fruitful research outcomes and demonstrate that there are different local workplace environments.

#### **4.3.3 Cross case comparability; between respondents and between sites**

In this research a semi-structured interview method was adopted to achieve a degree of ‘cross case comparability’ (Bryman, 2004:324). The semi-structured interview schedule can be transferred across the different college sites, to permit inter organisational comparability of the phenomenon of practice. Quantitative research methods would not allow for such in depth analysis and unstructured interviewing techniques would, most likely, lead to the ‘white noise’ of data swamping, as described above.

#### **4.3.4 Establishing categories of respondents**

Two categories of lecturers are apparent in the literature on lecturers’ work: novices and those who are experienced (Avis et al., 2002). Initially, a novice lecturer was defined as one who had worked at the college for less than one year and an experienced lecturer, one who had been teaching in colleges for at least 15 years. These definitions were later modified, as a result of the findings of the interviews that were carried out during the pilot study (see section 4.6 below). These two distinct groups of lecturers were identified for interviewing in this study, as it became evident from the pilot study that there were significant variations in their stories. In addition, for the purpose of triangulation it was considered that interviewing managers, regarding lecturer’s practice, would be a beneficial

pursuit. That is to say triangulation is when the same question is asked of different sources of evidence and ‘as this evidence converges, the degree of confidence in the issue increases’ (Yin, 1993:69). Interview schedules were drawn up for all of these three categories of employees and were tailored for appropriateness. For example, it would be pointless to ask a novice lecturer how his/her practice had developed over a significant time period, because they haven’t been there that long. From within these three groups a quota of interviewees was selected purposefully with the aim of maximising the breadth and depth of information collection (Mason, 2002:138). It should be noted at this point that to interview the respondents in each of the college sites, it was necessary to gain access to all levels of the organisational hierarchy. For researching in companies and corporations, it is usually at a senior position in the management hierarchy that permission for access and the researcher’s terms of reference have to be agreed, before research commences. Without endorsement by the management, working within the organisation may become very difficult for the researcher (Buchanan, Boddy and McCalman, 1988:56).

#### **4.3.5 Piloting the study**

A pilot stage for a study is generally recommended, so that the data collection strategy and the tools used can be reviewed and modified, in order to correct errors. For example, from the results of the pilot stage the question themes and wording of questions can be modified to reflect the real situation more accurately. A pilot preceding the main wave of fieldwork can, however, have limitations, for example the number of pilot interviews may have to be curtailed owing to time constraints, site access problems and availability of respondents. The potential limitations to the study brought about by such issues can be identified and courses of action taken to ameliorate their effect (Arthur and Nazroo, 2003:135).

This section has presented the methodological processes that are entailed in this study.

#### **4.4 Ethical issues**

A number of ethical issues need to be addressed when carrying out investigative fieldwork. Robson (2002) listed ten ‘questionable’ practices in social research. These are primarily concerned with the issue of directly or indirectly causing harm to the individual, who participates in the study. In a qualitative study, where the context in which individuals are situated is significant, making sure that neither the individual nor their organisation is



identified is a very important consideration. Any study needs to proceed in such a way that the information given by respondents is not repeated to others within the organisation, as this has the potential to disturb the working lives of the individuals concerned. Equally, the identity of the organisation has to remain confidential, so that competitor organisations or local communities are not able to identify it. If the site can be identified, it potentially betrays the inside confidential workings of the organisation to others and could place it at a disadvantage, with regard to competitors in the field.

It is considered good research practice that the participants, both organisations and individuals, are fully informed and give their consent in the full knowledge of the purpose and uses to which the study findings will be put. In order to protect and foster participants' consent, a number of strategies can be used: individuals and organisations are supplied with an outline of the research, the voluntary nature of participation is emphasised and the right to withdraw from the study, at any time, are clearly stated, before and during participation (Lewis, 2003:69). Thus, participants are viewed as willing partners in the interviewing process.

In writing the report of the study, the issue of protecting the anonymity of participants is crucial. The light in which individuals and organisations are presented may be of great concern to them when it is published. However, the researcher has to resist any pressure from participants, who may wish to exert influence and change the nature of the report or amend the findings contained within it. Obviously, the correction of factual inaccuracies is permitted for the final report. Pseudonyms and removal of easily attributable features can protect individuals' and organisations' identities. This has to be balanced against the potential loss of presenting some of the rich contextualised and situated information gathered during the study. For example, in this study if college size was a restricted piece of information, a significant feature of the contextual understanding would be lost (Bryman, 2004).

In light of the above discussion, this researcher accepted the ethical considerations and all attempts were made for the research procedure to be consistent with these concerns.

#### **4.5 Operationalising concepts**

The research questions examine the key dimensions of autonomy, responsibility and knowledge in lecturers' practice. To explore these dimensions with respondents on the college sites, it is necessary to develop them into comprehensible questions. That is, any interview schedule needed to be structured with the purpose of enquiring about these dimensions, in terms familiar to the interviewees.

#### **4.5.1 Using the literature reviews to form interview topics**

The literature review (chapter 2) discussed the integrated and holistic nature of practice. This discussion eventually led to the identification of the three components of practice: autonomy, responsibility and knowledge (Furlong et al., 2000). These factors are interrelated and cannot be isolated out from each other. When incorporating them into questions for the interviews, one question on the schedule may prompt responses giving information about more than one dimension. For example, the dimension of responsibility can be probed by questions about lecturers' time and work, i.e. the time they have and quantity of tasks and duties they are expected to carry out in a specific time period. However, this issue of work 'pace' does not just relate to responsibility, it is also an integral part of knowledge and autonomy, because lecturers may require time to reflect, plan their teaching and in effect 'learn' whilst they perform their duties. Reports of lecturers sensing that they are 'time poor' in their jobs are commonplace in the literature on lecturers' labour processes (see chapter 3).

#### **4.5.2 Formulating questions for the interview schedules**

As a consequence, question formulation is a complex and challenging process, which can be assisted by firstly carrying out the literature review and secondly, by using the insights gained from the pilot study. The first stage was to carry out the literature review of lecturers' work that presented a picture of intensification and extensification of labour in colleges under the calculative regime introduced at incorporation. The areas that were put on the interview schedule for lecturers and managers in the pilot stage of the study were slightly pre-structured from this literature (discussed in chapter 3). They included the following general considerations about the job and the college environment:

- What is your job? / What is a lecturer's job?
- What do you need to know to do your job? / What does a lecturer need to know?
- What space is there for learning? / Where do lecturers learn the job?

- Who helps you in your job? / Who helps lecturers do their job?

Following the pilot stage the semi-structured interview schedule was modified, because it became evident that the structure of the interview had to be more precisely worded around the different factors concerning the lecturer's job. Nevertheless, the topics that emerged for further investigation in the main study, continued to reflect many of the issues that had been highlighted earlier in the literature on lecturers' work contexts.

In order to study different sites and different individuals on the sites, a strong degree of cross case comparability (see 4.3 above) was required in the interview question content. If totally unstructured questions are put the responses can take on any form and comparing these between individuals and/or sites becomes very difficult. Moreover, if there is no common question content, there is no validity to assessing which answers match to which of the themes and interpretation becomes highly subjective. Therefore, semi-structured interviews which were slightly open ended and allowed respondents some degree of freedom in what they wanted to discuss, were preferred against totally unstructured in depth interviewing techniques.

For the main study, three similar schedules were drawn up for novices, experienced lecturers and managers.<sup>5</sup> However, although these covered the same topics of interest, they were termed in such a way so as to correspond with the respondent's identity. For example, managers were questioned about lecturers' practice from their perspective, which obviously is different from lecturers thinking about their own roles. The focus of questions for the main study schedules was developed into the following categories, to facilitate the analytical processing of the responses:

- Time and tasks
- Training and learning
- Work content
- College structures and organization
- What it means to be a lecturer

However, this categorisation needed to recognise the possibility that responses to these questions could fall into more than one category.

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<sup>5</sup> Refer to appendix 4.1 for a copy of each of these schedules and examples of the interviewees' responses

This section has explained the process of translation of the key concepts of autonomy, responsibility and knowledge into everyday workable terms, which are comprehensible to a broad range of college staff. By undertaking this task of translation into everyday language, responses to questions can be more reliable and more accurately related to the goals of the study. Moreover, grouping these responses into clear categories simplifies the subsequent data analysis.

#### **4.6 The fieldwork process**

This section deals with the fieldwork stage of the study. The pilot is outlined in some depth. The issues arising from the pilot, namely the problems and how these were addressed for the main fieldwork stage are discussed.

##### **4.6.1 Pilot study**

Access to the large urban college that was used as the pilot study was gained in the autumn of 2005, by establishing a good working relationship with the HR Director. This was initiated through the good offices of a former colleague of this researcher, who was a senior academic manager. Preparation was carried out by phoning and then meeting with the Human Resources (HR) Director and Staff Development Manager (SDM), to explain the research. The meetings were followed up with letters: one was sent to the HR Director setting out the areas of questioning, another outlining the research and informing staff about the interviews was sent for the staff newsletter, and a further letter was sent to formally ask for permission to carry out the pilot and to obtain the Principal's written agreement for publication. The letters stated that the college would not be identified and that the lecturers and managers involved would remain anonymous.

Regarding novices (see definition above), eight interviews were planned and six were actually carried out. The intention was to record the interviews, if the participants acceded to the request and six interviews were held in the first wave. These novices were then approached for a second wave of interviews at the end of May 2006, to see if other factors relevant to their practice had come to the fore during the first few months of teaching. However, on returning to this institution it was found that only two of the original participants were available for interview; two were unavailable and the remaining two had

left the college. Two experienced lecturers were interviewed, one being an advanced practitioner and the other a mentor. Interviews were held with managers: the Vice Principal (VP), Director of HR, Staff Development Manager and two Heads of Team. By the end of fieldwork, including that of the main study, only one Vice Principal of these senior managers remained at the college and he was not responding to any attempts at communication. However, this had no bearing on the main study, as the pilot served the function of formulating the appropriate sets of questions and was not instrumental to the main research outcomes. Although the findings in the pilot study were interesting they were not carried over to the analysis stage of the substantive study.

#### **4.6.2 Challenges encountered during the pilot stage**

##### **a) Access**

Although the researcher was given a great deal of assistance, both by her former colleague and by the SDM in organising the pilot study, ultimately, it was not an easily replicable way for accessing other colleges. It is unlikely that any researcher would have sufficient personal contacts in a number of colleges. Moreover, it could be argued that such an opportunistic means of access is not desirable and may lead to methodological disadvantages of: not accessing the organisation with an open mind, not being sensitive to diverse interest groups and the multiple perspectives held by other members of the organisation (Crompton and Jones, 1988).

##### **b) Confidentiality**

The extensive involvement of the SDM in organising the interviews for the pilot study may have had consequences for the confidentiality of participants' responses. Some of the participants may have moderated their responses, fearing that their confidentiality was not secure. Similarly, this may have accounted for the refusal by the experienced lecturers and two of the novices to have their interviews recorded. Clearly, trust in the ability to be able to protect confidentiality became an issue, which would need to be addressed in the main study.

##### **c) Control of the selection of participants**

This researcher was not involved in choosing who to interview from the lecturing cohort. The selection of novices in the pilot was haphazard and not really effective, because the college SDM selected novice staff from her database of college newcomers. The database

emerged to be insufficiently detailed about the newcomers' former experiences. As a consequence some of the novices, on arriving at interview, informed me they had had many years of prior teaching experience, for example, teaching overseas or part time in a secondary school. One participant had been the bursar of a junior college in Mumbai (India) for over thirty years and could hardly be considered a novice. Thus, this potential anomaly needed to be avoided for the principal research.

d) Researcher seen as an agent of management

As the former colleague who helped with access was a senior manager in the college, the researcher was associated with this manager during the visits to the college. This facilitated good access to the principal and vice principal, but may have had a negative effect on lecturers and other managers. Given this personal connection with a manager, it is quite possible that lecturers held suspicions about the role of the researcher and the purpose of the project. Therefore, this raised the question of needing to be perceived as impartial and it would need to be addressed, if future interviews were to be reliable in what they revealed.

e) Communications with the institution

The quick turnover of staff was potentially problematic, in that many of the initial study participants had gone within one year. Fortunately, the pilot site was only used for a short time. As the main study was envisaged as possibly needing at least a year to carry out fieldwork, a high staff replacement rate could have posed a problem and thus it became crucial that the colleges used in the main study exhibited much greater stability, regarding staff turnover.

f) Emotional responses from interviewees

The purpose of the interviews was to question respondents about their working lives. As an interviewer, I was unprepared for the emotional nature of some of the discussions that occurred. Some respondents became very upset and distraught, whilst recounting their experiences. This unexpected element brought to the fore a number of issues, not least for me the need to retain my role as an interviewer and not stray into the realms of counsellor and/or advisor. Moreover, it forewarned me of what might occur during interviews in the main study and thus I was able to prepare myself for any emotional situations.

#### **4.6.3 Addressing the problems encountered in the pilot**

##### **a) Access**

The researcher decided that the best approach to access colleges was to talk directly to the appropriate vice principal in the college. That is the vice principal who was seen as an advocate for the institution in the public arena, as well as being involved in internal day to day decision making. By so doing, a substantial degree of formality was introduced to the access process, in an attempt to lessen the potentially nepotistic issues outlined in the pilot study above. Moreover, by adopting such an approach for all three colleges in the main research, it introduced a consistency of approach which it was hoped would enhance the cross case comparability. In the three case-studies, once access and permission were obtained, the research project was passed on to the SDM, or an equivalent manager, who became the regular contact and gatekeeper for the duration of the fieldwork.

Two strategies were adopted to find willing vice principals. One was to contact them by letter, seeking an appointment to explain the research, the nature of the questions and the steps that would be taken to protect the identity of the institutions and any individuals who volunteered to participate. The second strategy involved attending conferences on Further Education during the spring/summer 2005, where the researcher informally explained the thesis to vice principals during the conference networking sessions and then asked them if their college would be willing to participate. Two research sites were obtained by writing to VPs and one more site was obtained by this more direct personal approach. As in the case of the pilot, letters were sent to the college, one informing staff about the nature of the research and one requesting formal permission for the study, from the principal.

##### **b) Researcher seen as an agent of management**

The issue of not being perceived as an agent of management was a serious matter. It was addressed in the main study in the strategies taken to obtain formal access (see (a) above) and in controlling the selection of participants (see (b) above).

##### **c) Control of the selection of participants**

As mentioned above, the selection of novices in the pilot led to the situation of mixing two kinds of novices: novices who were new to the college, but with extensive teaching experience, termed 'false beginners' and other novices who were new to the college and

had little or no background in instructing or teaching in their craft or commercial background, termed 'true beginners'. The novices that were of most interest to this research were 'true beginners' because they were put in the position of having to develop strategies to cope with an entirely new work environment, in order to develop their practice. What is strange and novel to the true novice may be taken for granted by the 'false beginner' and experienced lecturer. In order to identify 'true novices', the researcher approached those people responsible for delivering in-house Initial Teacher Training to newcomers; in-house delivery of ITT programmes is commonplace in FE colleges, nowadays. A short presentation about the study was given to ITT classes and novices were asked if they would like to participate. Names and email addresses of volunteers were gathered at these sessions. The researcher being in control of the decision as to when novices were to be interviewed i.e. during their first term of their first academic year, was considered essential for the main study fieldwork.

#### d) Confidentiality

The way in which the SDM was removed from controlling the selection of novices has been described above. For experienced lecturers, it was also thought necessary to remove the SDM from the process. To give participants a stronger sense of confidentiality, it was considered unacceptable that the SDM should know which of his/her colleagues were participating. The SDMs were asked for the contact details of the lecturers' trade union NATFHE branch representatives. This was a useful way to make a connection with experienced lecturers, in that union representatives usually hold their positions because they are well established, have long service in the college and often know other long serving colleagues. A branch officer was asked to forward an email to experienced colleagues asking for participants. On each main college site three or four experienced lecturers were approached and interviewed once using the semi structured (experienced lecturer) interview schedule. Management spine participants were specifically targeted by job title, because they held a position directly involved with academic lecturers' roles and their opportunities to develop practice. They were reassured that the college would not be identified in the study.

#### e) Communication with the institution

So as to obtain some degree of stability in study participants and make lasting contact with the organisations easier, only colleges that were not going through post merger re-



structuring, that were financially stable and had received a reasonably supportive Ofsted inspection report, were considered as sites. These factors were thought to provide the best basis for some continuity amongst staff and managers, at least for the duration of the study. Although the pilot college had not been undergoing any specific restructuring and was generally financially stable, very high turnover was occurring. The inner city location was considered to be another possible contributor to high staff turnover rates: the number and variety of competing schools or colleges, and other places of general employment in the immediate vicinity, meant employees were able to have a good choice of other jobs and to move on quickly.

#### f) Emotional responses

In the pilot interviews, one unexpected challenge was the frequency of the release of emotional tension by the respondents. On a number of occasions interviewees cried and shared their innermost thoughts and fears. The individual nature of the direction of each interview served to reinforce the view of Legard, Keegan and Ward (2003) that: ‘every interview situation is unique, and every interview a step into unknown territory’ (p165). That is to say, each interview takes the form of a unique journey which can incorporate a wealth of different responses as well as emotions. As a consequence, the researcher saw that she would have to be very careful when handling such situations and not become embroiled in an inappropriate manner. In particular, whilst offering a sympathetic ear, the researcher did not consider it her position to advise people on the action they should take. One example of emotional insecurity was from a novice lecturer<sup>6</sup> and one manager showed that the managers could also exhibit anxieties<sup>7</sup>.

#### 4.6.4 Further outcomes from the pilot study

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<sup>6</sup> One novice explained how in her first week in the college she had learnt how she needed to cover her back before taking action on any problem, ‘So, I wrote on the interview form [at enrolment] agreed by XXX [line manager], and 2 weeks later XXX came storming into the office saying, “Who let this girl onto my course? She’s too stupid to do it!” and I said, “Look, I phoned you up during the enrolment and you said yes, OK let her on [the course]”. Can you imagine what would have happened if I hadn’t got the evidence written down [on the enrolment form]? ....so from then on I thought to myself, I know what sort of a place this is.... Watch your back at all times..’ (NN novice pilot study).

<sup>7</sup> For example, one Head of Team criticised her two Deputies who would only see lecturers in their office when they were both present. She did not believe that this was an appropriate way to deal with lecturing staff, however, if she challenged this behaviour, the two deputies in question would report her action to a more senior manager. As she stated: ‘There is nothing I can do about it because they just go above my head to the VP.’ (DD Head of Team pilot study).

As the pilot interviews progressed, the researcher realised that her knowledge of the ‘college speak’ was an asset: knowing the mnemonics, such as: LP (lesson plan), ILP (individual learning plan), SOW (scheme of work), ECM (Every Child Matters), AP (advanced practitioner), Comms (key skills communications) and AoN (key skills application of number), had two positive outcomes. Firstly, because there was no need for the respondents to explain the vast majority of the abbreviations, this allowed for conversation and exchange to flow more freely. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, when the researcher demonstrated that she understood the shorthand versions, it showed that she ‘was one of them’. That is, she could identify with the issues that were being raised and as a consequence, she holds the opinion that the interviewees were more willing to tell their stories.

Bearing this in mind, two potential challenges arise. Firstly, there is the problem of anecdotalism, this concerns the researcher collecting information which is hearsay, third party reporting, which may be untrue and exhibit the prejudices of the respondents or their wish fulfilment (Legard, Keegan and Ward, 2003). This researcher would contend that the diverse nature of the research design for this thesis led to a minimisation of the effects potentially caused by this problem. The second potential pitfall for the researcher is to over identify with the respondent, which would lead to a failure to maintain an objective stance in the study by: ‘being co-opted, going native, swallowing the agreed upon or taken-for-granted version of local events’ (Miles and Huberman, *op. cit.* p265). If this situation occurs, there is the danger that the interviewer cues the responses she wants in the interviews and thus pre-determines the outcomes, to a large degree.

#### **4.6.5 Main study**

The main study was carried out in the academic year 2005/2006 in the three GFECs to which access was gained. The pilot study was carried out in the autumn of 2005 and the main interview phase began in summer 2006. To ensure access, a preliminary visit to meet with the college Vice Principal was carried out. The first interviews for novices occurred early in the 2006 autumn term, in order to catch them when they were new to the post. A total of three days in each college was allocated to this end. Experienced lecturers and managers were seen at a later date on a second visit to each site, lasting approximately two days. The table below summarises the interviews carried out in the pilot and in the main

study colleges. All the respondents for the main study and the pilot are listed with their identifiers in appendix 4.2.

**Table 4.1: Interviews carried out at the pilot and main study sites**

College Respondents	Pilot	College A	College B	College C
<b>Novices</b>	6 (4*)	3	2	2
<b>Experienced</b>	2	3	3	4
<b>Management</b>	VP  HRM SDM HTT DHTT	VP  HRD SDM HTT  <i>plus Clerk to Governors</i>  <i>plus Quality Assurance Manager</i>	VP  HRM SDM HTT  <i>plus Clerk to Governors</i>  <i>plus DHTT</i>	VP/ Director  HR (Assistant Manager) SDM HTT  <i>plus Clerk to Governors</i>  <i>plus DHTT</i>

\* Only four of the pilot cohort were ‘true novices’ and of relevance to the study

Some practical issues were encountered in the main study and these are outlined below.

Arranging times to meet with middle managers and lecturers was particularly difficult, because all members of staff were pushed for time and had many commitments, such as lessons and tutorials that could not be cancelled or postponed. Lecturers were interviewed during their only non-teaching slot for the day, after teaching hours ended or during mid-term ‘reading weeks’, when no classes were scheduled. Originally, the idea of focus groups was considered as a means to interview participants, but insufficient numbers of people

could ever be available at the same time for these to happen. As a college lesson usually lasted about 50 minutes, it was most convenient for lecturers to limit the interviews to approximately 45 minutes, as this fitted in with their college timetable.

Visiting the three sites involved a considerable amount of organisation and this did not always go according to plan. Examples of difficulties that were encountered included: snowfall that closed motorways and prevented travel, a NATFHE strike which closed a college campus and individuals taking sick or parental leave; as a consequence plans to interview participants had to be re-arranged. Two participants who were absent on the day of interview were reached by phone and contact was maintained in this way. Usually email was the principal means of communicating with participants. For reasons of confidentiality, personal information was not exchanged via the college email system; however, this proved a very convenient method for arranging interviews and communicating with participants about the study.

One unexpected dimension of the study, as mentioned above, was the emotional aspect of the interviewing process. Writing down personal thoughts and keeping a journal of the most draining sessions, helped me to process this emotional challenge. In addition, having a support network of friends and colleagues around me with whom I could discuss certain 'incidents', whilst maintaining confidentiality, was useful. Many of these colleagues had a background in working in FE and understood the circumstances that I had listened to in participants' narratives.

#### **4.7 Data analysis**

A grounded theory method of analysis emphasises the researcher's role of keeping the relationship firmly established between the collection of the study data, its analysis and any theory that is offered from the findings (Bryman, 2008:541). The precise definition of what is a grounded theory process is not absolute, as different styles have emerged, but the key features are variously listed as: systematic and coordinated coding of data, visiting the data repeatedly to carry out coding whilst more is being added, constant data comparison and more refined coding. This will eventually lead to the development of new theories for empirical testing (Robson, op. cit. p194). One specific form of grounded theory analysis is Framework Analysis, which attempts to establish

an ordered process for theme analysis from the outset of the process, rather than a more emergent choosing of such themes (Ritchie and Spencer, 2004).

#### **4.7.1 Framework Analysis**

Ritchie and Spencer (1994) suggested five stages for analysing themes emerging from qualitative data. These stages have been employed in this current research and how they were applied in this particular work is set out below.

##### **a) Familiarisation**

At this stage the objective for the researcher is to submerge herself in the data that has been collected from the field. For this study, this meant reading all the literature that had been collected from the colleges, e.g. Ofsted reports, brochures, college policy documents and the notes made after each visit to the colleges. Also the transcribed recordings of all the interviews that had taken place were reviewed, to recall the answers that respondents had given to the questions asked using the semi structured interview schedules.

##### **b) Identifying a framework**

Whilst reading through all the material gathered from the colleges, various notes were made and issues that recurred and appeared to be important to interviewees were underscored to give an initial outline or initial framework for the themes that were emerging in the study. This early processing of a few transcripts followed by yet further few transcripts worked on the actual words used by respondents in order to construct a tentative index of categories that were recurring in the data. The indexing categories were constructed from the topics covered in the interviews and the recurrent and new issues that emerged from the transcripts. This index of topics consisting of five main categories and their subcategories constituted the initial framework.

##### **c) Indexing**

The next stage was to address all the transcripts and to label each section of the text of each transcript with an identifying page number and the framework category to which it belonged. Over time, this set of categories was gradually refined and was enhanced when additional dimensions were introduced after considering the interview transcripts from all three groups of respondents, namely, novice and experienced lecturers and

manages. Unique or respondent specific data could be accommodated in subcategories. Moreover, as the fieldwork moved between colleges, the categories could be reconsidered, even though to a large extent, the same issues were repeated. These gradually enhanced categories were concepts that drew on the actual words used by the respondents themselves, as recorded in the transcripts, e.g. time spent at work, training received from his/her line manager. These phrases conveyed the meanings of and the underlying patterns of the themes of the study.

#### d) Charting

Having broken down transcripts into labelled sections, it was necessary to put the material back together. The data was reconstructed in the form of the three types of actors identified, namely, novices, experienced lecturers and managers. For each college, a piece of A3 paper was used to assemble all the text referring to each of the five framework themes. This was done by writing on five different coloured pieces of paper the relevant piece of text with its indexing number and original page number from the transcript. Owing to the frequency and depth of interviewees' responses, for some of the themes, a lot of text was assigned, whereas for others, less was available for charting. When the pieces of coloured paper were assembled to go on the A3 chart, respondents were grouped so that it was easier to see comments on one area simultaneously, e.g. all the novices talking about the theme of work intensity were placed together.

**Table 4.2 Categories and themes**

<b>(Main) Index categories</b>	<b>Themes</b>
Time and tasks	Work intensity
Training and learning	Learning for work
Work content/quality	Work quality
What it means to be a lecturer	Work orientation
College organisation	Work organisation

#### e) Mapping and interpretation

At this stage of the analytical process, when all the data for each college had been charted, a better picture of the site as the lecturers' workplace was forming. The similarities and differences in understandings, in terms of the themes became consolidated. This prepared the way for relating the analysis back to the original research questions, through the practice dimensions of autonomy, responsibility and knowledge and hence to the question of practice. To allow for the richness of the study data to come across it was necessary to present the data for each case-study site in such away that the reader was not swamped with detail and vignettes were considered an appropriate vehicle for this. To discuss the dimensions of practice, a separate chapter section on each that drew on the findings in all the sites was developed.

#### **4.7.2 Moving on from analysis**

A substantial amount of qualitative data was amassed and analysed following the framework method for each of the three case-study colleges. However, only a relatively restricted amount of this data can be presented so as to keep this thesis pertinent and succinct. However, doing justice to the complexities of practice is paramount and adopting the vignette approach, as a platform for rolling out each case study, is a useful way to show the nature of practice in each college. The vignette, the presentation strategy preferred here, has also been termed a narrative scene, or a profile. This has been defined as a 'focused description of a series of events taken to be representative, typical or emblematic in the case' (Miles and Huberman, *op. cit.* p81) and the following section describes more fully how these were constructed.

### **4.8 Data presentation**

#### **4.8.1 Using vignettes to present findings**

Vignettes are characterised as having the following: narrative structure, chronological flow, coverage of a limited time period, few key actors and bounded to limited issues/space. Vignettes are often produced by the researcher, from looking back through field notes. They may be written, either at the mid point of a study to focus on events, or towards the end of a study when findings are more established, as a way to present them. They can be constructed from actual data transcripts or may be created by the researcher, who authors what he/she 'sees' is a typical account of events or interactions at the case-study site. It has to be remembered that the use of vignettes for presentation purposes is

potentially a two edged sword. As the vignette is a very persuasive means of putting across findings, there is a strong risk, if the scenario is not really representative, of misleading both the researcher and reader (Miles and Huberman, op. cit. p83). To guard against this, more than one vignette and accompanying commentaries are required for each case, and an explanation of how the vignette was selected needs to be made clear. In spite of the potential difficulties, a vignette is very useful for displaying data, because study data, once broken down for coding and analysis, may be lacking in spirit. The situatedness and the real life nature of the narrative could be lost, but a vignette is a 'useful integrative device for reconstructing and communicating key phenomena – and interpretations of them – in a case' (Miles and Huberman, op. cit. p82).

#### **4.8.2 How the vignettes were selected and constructed**

The presentation of data in this thesis had the intention of giving a rich account of the situated practice of lecturers in the case-study colleges. The aim was to give a narrative scene that showed lecturers negotiating within the college context i.e. lecturers talking about how they work out what to do, in the light of demands encountered in their unique college environment. For this study, it was decided to use words spoken by participants, as recorded during the fieldwork, so that the scene was based in events or issues that actually happened and to which lecturers had to respond. A concomitant point of view on the same issue was taken from the words spoken by a manager or another lecturer. This matching up of comments to create vignettes was self evident, because many respondents talked about the same topic in each college. Contemporary issues from the different sites included, for example: key skills, ECM and what constitutes a good lesson.

As posited above, a vignette should have a narrative structure and chronological flow, so that it is informative and tells the story of how something happened or was dealt with. It needs to be 'bounded', that is, concerns a small part of the experience of a participant and relates to certain time periods or events involving the participant and maybe one or two others. Evidently, when lecturers describe their own practice they will talk in the first person, but for managers, it is accepted that they will talk about the practitioners in their college. One of the criteria considered important here for constructing vignettes, is that lecturers' narratives are about their own understandings and experiences and that they are not, as far as could be ascertained, merely repeating hearsay. An event or issue considered for constructing a vignette was therefore not used unless the lecturer had personally



witnessed or participated in the events being talked about. First hand accounts are vivid and passionate, but can be misleading precisely because they are so captivating. To the researcher, some narratives may assume unwarranted significance and come to dominate, giving an unjustified overall impression of the college workplace. So as not to present a skewed picture of a college site, very emotional or distressed personal narratives from participants, which were sometimes disclosed in interviews, were not selected for presentation. Use of such sensational events should be avoided, as they could turn out to be unique, rare and thus of little relevance to a balanced analytical study.

The purpose of the vignettes was to present data relevant to the discussion of the five themes related to practice. No single vignette was constructed with the intention of covering all five themes and thus at least two vignettes are presented, as recommended above, to give adequate representation of each case-study. Moreover, two vignettes are given for each college, so as to ensure that all five analytical themes are addressed for each institution.

To back up the narratives from the case study sites, a brief outline of the college corporation is given. This details the function and location, governance and management and staff deployment, whilst protecting the anonymity of the college. Without some indication of the nature of the organisation, it would not be possible for the reader to place the vignettes in their appropriate context. Following the illustration of each vignette, an extended commentary using relevant quotes and discussion from additional interviewees, is presented. The commentary is an important part of the vignette, as it locates the happenings in the wider college context and culture.

#### **4.8.3 Discussion of the research questions**

The findings for this research are given in chapter 5, in the form of vignettes and these capture the tenets of practice on each of the college sites. Although at this stage, the themes have been made evident in each of the colleges, another step is to conceptualise these in terms of the theoretical dimensions. This is the consideration of the dimensions of lecturers' practice, i.e. autonomy, responsibility and knowledge that emerge from the vignettes. Therefore, chapter 6 discusses practice and chapter 7 draws some conclusions from this study.

#### **4.9 Conclusion to chapter**

The qualitative methodology, as set out above, was carried out in the three colleges used for the main study. The next chapter uses vignettes to illustrate some of the differences in day to day practice at these sites and prepares the way for the discussion in chapter 6.

## **Chapter 5: Presentation of findings**

### **5.1.1 Introduction to chapter**

This chapter employs the device of vignettes to illustrate the thematic content. A discussion of the purpose of the use of vignettes has been presented in chapter 4. Each vignette is developed in a commentary to attain texture and fuller understanding of the themes as they emerge in each college context. The vignettes serve a number of purposes. Firstly, they allude to differences and similarities between each institution, secondly, they reveal the complexity of practice in each milieu, and thirdly, perhaps most importantly, they allow for the analytical development of the five themes illustrated in chapter 4.

In this chapter the uniqueness of each college site, and the nature of practice, contextualised in each college site, becomes evident. In order to locate the findings in their site, i.e. to give the structural and organisational peculiarities of each college that form the context in which practice is worked out by practitioners, the vignettes are introduced by means of a brief description of the college. Thus, the presentation of findings prepares the way for the next chapter, chapter 6, where discussion will specifically address the dimensions of practitioners' practice, namely autonomy, responsibility and knowledge.

### **5.1.2 Chapter outline**

To these ends, section 5.2 presents a thumbnail sketch and two vignettes accompanied by their commentaries for college A. Section 5.3 presents college B with a thumbnail sketch and two vignettes with commentaries. Similarly, Section 5.4 outlines college C with a thumbnail sketch and two vignettes with commentaries. The chapter conclusion is set out in section 5.5.

## **5.2 College A**

### **5.2.1 Thumbnail sketch of college A**

Here college A is described. The first section introduces the situation of the GFEC in its local community and the local competition it faces in the pseudo market for post 16 education provision. This is followed by a description of the main features of the governance, management and staffing. Names and locations are protected to maintain the confidentiality of the participants and the anonymity of the institution. To this end, the

figures shown are only approximations and serve the purpose of giving an indication of the nature of the workplace environment being considered.

a) Positioning in the post 16 education market

College A was an urban college with 10 sites and 2 main campuses and was the only GFEC in the vicinity. It had just under 10,000 students which included: approximately 3,000 16-19 year olds in full-time attendance, about 1,000 students following apprenticeships through the college, a small number (300-400) of 14-16 year olds from local schools attending part-time and some international students on specific short courses (e.g. EFL). The remainder of the 10,000 were part-timers funded through the LSC. Provision covered all 15 of the Ofsted subject areas and teaching was delivered through 8 academies, with 3 Centres of Vocational Excellence in the service industries. The 2003 Ofsted inspection found the majority of areas to be grade 3 (satisfactory) and in the latest inspection in January 2007 provision had improved to being predominately grade 2s.

Within the student catchment area, college A competed for 16-19 year old learners with four, highly rated, sixth forms in grammar schools, selective independent schools and one arts institute. There were three small 'minor' public schools (for day scholars) within commutable distance. Most of the state secondary schools in the town offered a range of level 1 and 2 vocational courses (GNVQ/BTEC) alongside the GCSE curriculum and three schools also offered 16-18 years academic programmes, i.e. AS and A2. When AS/A2 result scores were ranked, out of the four stated sixth forms, college A's small 'A level' provision sat second to bottom and it was still second to bottom when compared with all schools in the catchment area.

The college mission in the local competition for students was to provide a fully inclusive institution for the town, according to the governors. It was non-selective and had programmes at nearly all levels, to cover a wide range of learning abilities. However, they were unable to cater for the most severely disabled. Some 40% of the 16-19 year olds arrived with additional learning needs, having attained below national benchmarks in GCSEs i.e. fewer than 5 GCSEs at grade C or above and these students thus followed vocational courses at below level 3. One of the college academies was the small sixth form centre, but the main focus of the college provision was vocational qualifications from pre-entry level to level 3. There was a growing interest in developing links with the

neighbouring higher education institute (HEI) to provide partnerships at level 4 and establish Foundation Degrees in a small number of disciplines; mostly the arts and service industries.

b) Management and organisational features

In 2002 a new Principal was appointed replacing the previous incumbent, who had been in post for about 8 years. In autumn 2007 this Principal, during whose tenure this fieldwork was carried out, handed in his resignation with the intention of finishing in spring/summer 2008. Whereas the pre-2002 Principal had had a great interest in the arts and literature, the current Principal was from a commercial background and was business orientated. After this Principal was appointed there had been marked revision to the nature of the function of the Human Resources Department, which was considered to have been operationally weak previously. During the early 2000s, several HR directors were appointed, each subsequently soon left and personnel operations remained 'weak'. The Director of HR was a member of the Executive Management Team. Under the current Principal there was a restructuring and a new Executive created, whereby there had been a division between strategic and operational management. Most recently, to improve productivity the HR Director had taken the lead in the introduction of a revised contract for college lecturers (2005), under which attendance for staff was extended by 2 weeks in the summer and half-terms became 'course review weeks', with compulsory staff attendance. One of the Vice Principals was tasked with improvements in the college. One of his roles was to improve teaching standards and the recent inspection results appeared to reflect that there has been some degree of success. He developed the role of the Staff Development Manager to enhance the teacher training and staff induction processes and he appointed the Quality Assurance Manager. This new role was filled by a non-teacher who was recruited directly from a listed financial sector firm. This manager brought business and commercial nous to the college and acted as an expert within the college setting.

The Governing Board had a range of committees operating in accordance with the AoC recommended 'Carver Model of Policy Governance' and the day to day running of the college, as the model proposes, was delegated to the Principal/CEO. Unusually for a GFEC, there was a Human Resources Committee at Board level, but the right of employee dismissal was delegated to the Principal, under the Scheme of Delegation. There was no

appeal against dismissal to the governors, thus in effect the Principal was the de facto employer of staff. The Board was engaged in overseeing the multi-million pound rebuilding of one of the campuses that dated back to the 1970s.

c) Lecturers and managers

There were approximately 2,000 full-time and part-time members of staff, however an actual breakdown of these was not available. A variety of college lecturing contracts existed, ranging from lecturer to demonstrator/tutor. The lecturing staff could be considered as falling into one of two categories: those employed by the college and, those who were self employed and worked on campus through an employment agency. All newly recruited part-timers were agency workers. Although they were assigned to teams in Academies, they did not have any entitlement to training or staff development programmes, were paid for 'contact time' only and did not usually have a desk or workspace in the staff workroom. They were not given a formal induction process, but were included in the review process and were formally appraised by their line managers. It was observed during the research period that a common practice was that following a few months of satisfactory performance, as a part-time lecturer, an agency worker was approached to join the college as a contracted member of staff. This arrangement gave the incentive to the agency workers to stay, in the hope that they will be appointed as bona fide college staff members. It was also beneficial to management, in that this group could be let go if there was a need for staff reductions, with no high redundancy costs. The turnover of part-time agency workers was quite rapid and this could be a source of instability within some teaching areas. Likewise, line managers seemed to be quickly replaced and this was another source of instability. However amongst full time lecturers, a degree of stability existed in between restructuring events such as the renegotiation of lecturers' terms and conditions in 2005. Following the re-issuing of the new contracts, the staff believed that they were comparatively worse off than before, having lost ten days of their annual leave to the college and gained the concomitant workload of this period and the additional 'review weeks'. They regarded themselves as much worse off than local school teachers and probably near the bottom of the terms and conditions scale for GFEC college lecturers in the region.

Induction for newly appointed staff consisted of two 'briefing sessions' one provided by the Staff Development Manager and the other by the HR department. Each academic

member of staff belonged to a teaching team for their subject discipline. The team leader reported to the Academy Director, who was answerable to one of six Assistant Principals. These Assistant Principals came under one of the three Vice Principals. The Principal had a role very removed from operations, with the Vice Principals being made responsible for the day to day operational delivery and management. This was an unusually hierarchical management structure, in that the inclusion of the Assistant Principal tier was not found in any of the other case study colleges.

### 5.2.2 Vignettes in college A

The findings in college A are presented in two vignettes. Firstly, ‘a good lesson’ and secondly, ‘traffic lights’ are used to compare and contrast the responses. A comparison is made between lecturers and managers, and in addition the responses of novice lecturers and experienced lecturers are presented. The vignettes offer a platform from which the analytical themes can be further explored for this case study site.

### 5.2.3 Vignette 1: ‘a good lesson’

#### a) Manager’s explanations

*‘I think to get a grade 2 lesson nowadays is much more difficult than it was four years ago. We came up with a list of extra requirements that have been placed on the lecturer that’s different to four years ago....integrate some ILT into your lesson, you should be aware of the key skills opportunities that come up, differentiation is much more important now’.*  
(VP)

#### b) Experienced lecturer’s explanations

*‘I think it’s harder to give a good lesson nowadays. [20 years ago] they were more equipped with the tools to come to FE. The basic study skills and willingness to conform has gone. The students we have got now are still intelligent and still interested, but not as geared to the FE set up and I don’t think that the changes that are being made to try and address that...they tend to be more finance driven. ...  
They haven’t really found the balance for the students. Perhaps education itself is something that’s been messed around with so much that I don’t think parents and students have as much faith in it themselves.’* (BS experienced lecturer)

The first vignette focuses on contrasting views of the changes that have occurred and current demands regarding lecturers' lessons. It is presented here to introduce the themes of work content, work intensity and work orientation.

The primary duty of college lecturers was seen to be to give good lessons. A lesson could be audited as 'good' on the occasions of annual formal observation by line managers and external inspections that took place every three or four years. The manager accepted the view that Ofsted standards were the appropriate mechanism for judging a 'good lesson'. A list of observable lesson content needed to be produced by the lecturer, in order to be assessed as 'good' i.e. grade 2 at inspection or during formal line manager observation. Evidently, it was agreed that the tasks of the lecturer have been broadened to encompass the curricula of key skills, interactive teaching technology and differentiation, usually interpreted as learning styles and catering for different levels of ability. These components of the lesson were expected to be included for each teaching session and recorded in the standardised college paper trail, so that performance could be monitored. A mechanistic and hollowed out concept of practice, that is an 'inspection' compliant performance, emerged here as the definition of a good lesson by the manager. Moreover, the manager's orientation was based around the concept that such a lesson largely consists of externally prescribed technical content, requiring little interpretation by the deliverer.

Having established one senior manager's perspective, this can be contrasted with the comments from lecturers. The manager linked audit criteria with the means of raising the quality of teaching, i.e. improved grades, whereas by contrast, experienced lecturers reported the criteria as contributing to their burden of record keeping and unconnected with improving their teaching: *'We are trying to incorporate all these, whether they are kinaesthetic, audio visual....again that's supposed to be on our LPs because Ofsted will need to see that, which I sometimes think, is it a case of jumping through hoops?'* (EE experienced). The extent of this audit driven paper chase was negatively typified as: *'[years ago] I might just write I'll do this on that date..... now I have to have a SOW. I can well see the reason for needing this but its now getting to the stage of when are we going to have time to deliver the lessons, because its teetering on the edge of just being a civil servant and a pen pusher'* (EE experienced). In other words, this lecturer emphasised the increasing non-teaching burden that had been placed upon him in recent years. For a



novice lecturer, there were similar concerns about the time consuming paperwork and lack of connection of inspections to what really happens: *'Everyone plans a lesson but creating the paperwork is something you do for Ofsted.'* *'The amount of demands on my time, teaching and so forth ...[for Ofsted] you have to do it by the book i.e. lesson plans in writing, for every lesson and reflecting back on them. You just don't have enough time'* (HM novice).

Interestingly, the methodology through which the disparate lesson contents (key skills, ILT, learning styles and subject) were to be joined together to make a good lesson by the lecturer, were not mentioned in the manager's comments above. When experienced and novice lecturers were asked about teaching, their bricolage with students was commented on at length and the Ofsted criteria were omitted. The handling of students' needs and the failure of the FE college system to accommodate the ever widening range of students, particularly those who would once not have been in education or training after the statutory school leaving age, were their concerns. Their student based orientation gave the impression that lecturers coped with this bricolage and coping was the real priority in their work: *'Things have changed over the years due to the funding ethos, the amount of competition around. Instead of having the cream [of students] we now have what's left over. We used to have the majority who could cope, now that percentage is instead of 18 OK and 2 with problems, we're now 2 OK and 18 with problems. The balance has gone too far in the other direction'* (WH experienced).

The consequences of changes in work content and student population, alongside the audit regime, were reflected in the work load burdens and work intensity for the lecturers: *'A lot of admin, funding issues, observation issues, new initiatives, requirements to be in college, more time pressure, students not always being equipped for learning when they come to college'* and the result of this was that: *'I have to put more hours into the job and I get much more tired and the students suffer and I suffer'* (BS experienced). When asked, the manager reluctantly admitted that there may have been a knock-on effect from changed work content leading to increased work intensity, but only for certain members of staff: *'ECM [Every Child Matters] is a big development and featured very largely in our inspection and most of that has to be dealt with through tutorials. It's all extra really.....I'm not sure that has impacted on workload...I think it's impacted on workload through tutorials. I would say it is disproportionate for those who are [personal] tutors'*

(VP). Another manager explained that some lecturers had failed to manage changes to their work effectively: *'Staff who have taken it on board over the years have just managed to build it into their job. Other staff are now being pushed ...its getting on top of them'* (SDM). This demonstrated the differing interpretations of managers and lecturers regarding increased work intensity and how this impacted on their ability to deliver a good lesson.

Given this increased work intensification, what strategies did lecturers employ to manage their time effectively and to be able to give good lessons? One novice lecturer described himself as having two jobs running parallel to each other. The first being planning and delivering his teaching and the second was 'fire fighting'. To cope with this *'[during the students' holidays] I pretty much planned and prepped the whole term's lessons'*. The reason for this was to give himself time, during the term, to handle the daily hurly burly *'what I do as I go along is basically tutoring and dealing with all the problems they have, assessments and whatever. If I didn't do all that prep in the holidays I wouldn't have time at all'* (HM novice). A further strategy was to eliminate what was described as unnecessary paperwork. Lesson plans for example were described as something fleeting, *'LPs seem to be a bit of an enigma in that they appear when Ofsted appears and don't reappear again'* (HM novice). This administrative burden of accounting for performance is yet another role on top of the two identified here, but only appeared to be enforced by college managers during periods of Ofsted inspection and the annual cycle of observation. Perhaps there was an unspoken recognition by college managers, that only during these audits did colleges have to work to the rules. At other times, the administrative burden was too onerous for lecturers to carry out and for managers to subsequently monitor. As one senior manager put it, *'I'd like to develop a stop doing list, not just a doing list. It may be custom and practice, but it just may be rubbish.'* (VP).

The achievement of a 'good lesson' was significant in another way, because effective work with students was identified as the main source of lecturers' work satisfaction. Satisfaction for the lecturer appeared to have little connection with the performance criteria outlined by the manager. Instead, lecturers highlighted creativity, vocational insight and discretionary elements of practice. The good lesson was described as creating a sense of personal enjoyment and a sharing of a career path or vocation that the lecturer was proud to be passing on to his students: *'I really do enjoy it here.. you're actually teaching them how to do the actual job. Everything you are teaching you can relate to the subject...every single*

*example I give is what I did and how it worked out. So that is 100% relevant to them.. then they get this feeling that this is someone I can learn from'* (HM novice). Or as an experienced lecturer put it: *'Where students give you positive feedback'* (BS experienced). The goal of flourishing for both students and teachers came out as high on the lecturers' agenda. However, opportunities for achieving this appeared to be rare, because of the increasing work intensity: *'Some days when I do 7 hours on the trot, in different parts of the building, and doing 32 hours a week teaching, you can't do it'* (HM novice), that is, give a good lesson. The repetitive nature of his teaching, awareness of his failure to give a good lesson and the physical demands, disappointed him: *'least satisfaction is going from one lesson to another, to another and not having time to prepare for it and so not giving as good a lesson as if you did have time to prepare for it'* (HM novice). Despite all this, this lecturer had, for what ever reason, experienced good lessons and orientated himself towards this as a driver to teaching good lessons in the future.

Lecturers were required to deliver their full teaching hours allocation every year and as a consequence were often asked to work in areas only indirectly linked to their speciality. Thus, they could be placed in situations where, from the outset, they anticipated that there would be little in the way of flourishing for them or their students: *'For instance [once] I had to teach key skills to 16 year old beauty therapy students. That wasn't my forte by any means. They were not interested and somebody could have done that job better. That never became a rewarding task, because the goal's never met as it were.'* (BS experienced). In such circumstances, teaching a good lesson would be a rare occurrence.

For the experienced lecturer, as with the novice, there was a sense of inadequacy when teaching didn't go well: *'Least rewarding is obviously where the students are not equipped or willing to learn or where you feel you've given a bad lesson...if you do give a poor lesson you know it, the students know it and its an unpleasant experience'* (BS experienced). Moreover, the experienced lecturer believed that most lecturers do want to be good teachers: *'If you are not doing your job you can get ostracised by your colleagues. I know that in a covert way you become less popular because there is still a quality ethos within us...and[people] want to do a very good job'* (BS experienced). This suggests that there existed some collegiate notion of doing a good job amongst experienced lecturers. The ethos was a tacit understanding shared by the experienced lecturers and was neither valued nor captured in the college's statistical evidence: *'There is the pressure to perform*

*well, and to be seen to perform well and there's also the notion of performing well, based upon statistical measures which probably doesn't measure up. But I think you know yourself how well the college is performing and ...how well your students are performing, but it's often difficult to get that across'* (BS experienced). In contrast to the experienced lecturer, who demonstrated a self confidence and reluctance to put too much store in the statistical measures of performance, one novice was upset when his retention and achievement percentages were worse than in the previous year. The novice feared the statistics reflected badly on him, even though it was not his fault that the students dropped out: *'so my figures aren't going to be as good next year...they [students]were pushed onto a course they didn't want to do.....within a month they didn't want to do it'* (HM novice). The orientation of the novice to statistical evaluation and the importance he had attached to the data made him far more vulnerable, in the event of his failure to perform well when one member of staff's figures were compared against another's. He appeared to place some faith in the data as presenting a reasonably accurate appraisal of his work. This would suggest that the experienced lecturer had confidence in his own self assessment of his performance, whereas the novice lecturer sought external approval. It could have been because he was new and inexperienced and/or point to changing orientations towards the profession over time.

The above vignette has been presented to outline the milieu of college A and to show the pressure that lecturers experienced in work intensity, extensive routinised work content and different orientations towards positive achievement. The following vignette looks in greater detail at the contrasting orientations of managers and experienced lecturers towards the job of a lecturer.

#### **5.2.4 Vignette 2: The 'Traffic Lights' Tool**

The second vignette for college A is an account of using 'Traffic Lights'. This was a newly adopted computer programme system, through which the lecturers carried out the annual 'course reviews' and audit performance.

##### **a) The 'Traffic Lights' tool from a manager's perspective**

*'Course review we changed from course teams meeting and creating a self assessment report, to each individual course having to report electronically on a set score card, over 21 criteria, and*

*then score themselves in red, green or amber against these criteria. It's a performance management tool.'*

*'Some staff took to it like ducks to water and said "you don't have to think!".*

*Other staff found this a completely onerous experience, wanted to discuss it at length. You can't really discuss whether students were there or not.....before where staff have sat around in a group and said "oh well it was only 80% attendance because dot dot dot...so we'll say its fine".*

*It's a management tool because they [the score cards] are shared.....then it's a clear indicator that XXX need to go in there and the managers need to go in there and have a look....its a more open process, where everybody can see what's happening and it allows us to target our resources that are increasingly limited.'* (SDM)

b) The 'Traffic Lights' tool from an experienced lecturer's perspective

*'For the past XX years I've been with [level 2] they've always been difficult students who don't know what they want to do. The achievement rate back then was 25% which was the national bench mark and here today we've got to get over 70%. We're in the late 60s but because we didn't hit 70% we're deemed as not good enough, which I find awful. We've been growing every year and yet we're not good enough'*

*'It said "you are below 70%, you're on red" so already I'm failing, although I'm not. If I could have set it, if I could have been responsible enough to put in the group, input the figures. If I reach 70% I'm happy with amber.....When you push yourself naturally and someone else says it's not good enough. You reach that point.. when a lot of people leave'*

*'You do have pressure with "why is your achievement data not as it should be?" "Well because they can't do it". "That's not good enough, keep them going until they get there". How long do you keep going and how many chances do you give [students to pass a module]? That does put into question the temptation of parents doing the work, anybody doing the work. So, they go into the workplace and they can't do it'. (WH experienced).*

The contested meaning surrounding the notion being a good lecturer is the underlying tension identified in this vignette on 'traffic lights', which is used here to illustrate the themes of work orientation and learning for work. It is presented to show the managers' shift towards a mechanistic definition of practice, concomitant with the college moving towards being, more and more, a business like, target driven operation. The clash in work orientations of what 'improving students' life chances' meant to an experienced lecturer, as compared with managers' orientations to this question, is clearly evident. The managers expected the lecturers not only to improve their teaching performance, but also to align

themselves with the commercial viability of the college. However, the lecturers mostly saw their orientation as primarily to the long term flourishing of their students.

From the management's point of view, the first consequence of being 'in business', was the effect of requiring that students pass, and 'retention and achievement' levels cross the pre-determined target thresholds. This was a large part of the traffic lights system. If the college did not meet such targets, they would not be treated favourably by the LSC, the main source of funding for the corporation, and the goal of increasing student numbers would be difficult to achieve. The traffic lights system demonstrates management's orientations towards a business agenda, in that it is consistent with the notion promulgated by macro level agencies, such as the LSC, that simplified bench marking leads to increased commercial viability and corporate success. This form of 'one size fits all' approach to delivery appeared to create major tension in the classroom setting, as there was little room under such a simplified system to take account of complicated notions of flourishing in the classroom. The vignette shows that this lecturer's orientation towards her students was clearly threatened by the business ethos, when she said *'how long do you keep going and how many chances do you give...?'* (WH experienced). This situation was eating away at her time and energy, because there was tension concerning the validity of the students' qualifications and integrity of the lecturers in this process. Any member of staff assessing the coursework had a vested interest in ignoring plagiarism or substandard coursework, to avoid trouble with managers for not meeting the traffic light thresholds. Phrases such as 'putting the students at the heart of practice', prioritising the 'students' needs' and 'giving students a chance' were commonly stated by all the interviewees, managers and lecturers alike. However, passing students 'on the nod' was viewed as unacceptable by the experienced lecturer, because ultimately, in her eyes, it was the students who would lose as the qualification was obtained under false pretences: *'So, they go into the workplace and they can't do it'*. (WH experienced). In other words, equipping students with a false qualification was, for this lecturer, irresponsible and incompatible with the orientations of anyone who claimed to place students' life chances at the heart of their work.

One further justification for introducing the traffic lights performance management tool was stated by the manager, as giving transparency to yearly data on courses across the college. Without the computer generated performance indicators, managers were not able to intervene in lecturers' self assessment processes, which hitherto had written off

‘substandard’ performance on grounds of contextualised knowledge of the students and the year’s events: they had been making excuses: “*oh well it was only 80% attendance because dot dot dot...so we’ll [i.e. the lecturer writing the self assessment in the course review] say its fine.*”’SDM. The manager was critical of those lecturers who want to discuss the narratives behind the data. He praised lecturers who didn’t quibble, noting the comment ‘*you don’t have to think!*’ from staff who appeared to be quite content to evaluate their performance by statistical criteria. The impression that emerges here is that managers did not want lecturers to think about their duties, ‘*You can’t really discuss whether students were there or not*’ SDM. He noted the lack of sharing of materials and lack of experienced staff telling others what to do ‘*People are beaver away at what they think they have to beaver away at so that a sharing ethos isn’t there in some staff rooms. They’re not discussing how they would do this and that. I think some people don’t understand that’s how it should work*’ (SDM). It could be argued that this contradicted his earlier view that lecturers should not question their roles. However, in essence, he was arguing that people should share materials and experienced staff should disseminate their wisdom to less experienced staff. This does not appear to sanction pedagogical questioning and supports the standardising of learning about practice, consistent with the commercialisation process going on in the college. Moreover, the traffic lights tool contributed to the experienced lecturer coming to realise that her pedagogical judgement, which was valued in the previous Annual Course Review process, was no longer trusted to produce acceptable and realistic outcomes, ‘*Now we don’t even set our targets, they come on the software*’ (WH experienced).

To conclude, the traffic lights tool, viewed by management as a standardised monitoring device introduced with the intention of improving performance, was seen by this particular experienced member of staff as entailing a gross over simplification in the managers’ understanding of her practice. Far from attracting her to the notion of a common college ethos of improving standards, its implementation had alienated her, as it was failing to respect the complexities of her practice. Moreover, to her, it failed to show any interest in individuals’ stories and flourishing; this further exacerbated this feeling of alienation.

The above two vignettes have considered the emergent themes: work intensity, work quality, work orientation and work organization and learning for work. In college A, the agendas of performance and commercialisation were rapidly being pushed forward, but as

can be seen above, it was leading to many lines of conflict between managers and lecturers, especially those with experience. Although it could be argued that change can be painful but necessary, there was evidence that failure by management to allow for serious dialogue and dissent, whilst on their commercialization quest, appeared to demonstrate that they reject the notion of tacit expertise residing in the FE college lecturer. The managers and lecturers appeared to share the goal of improving the college so that students can have better 'life opportunities'. However, managers through their actions appeared to create the opposite situation to that intended. This inconsistency of intentions with outcomes will be discussed further in chapter 6.

### **5.3 College B**

Here the findings from college B are presented. The first section introduces the situation of the GFEC in its local community and the local competition it faces in the pseudo market for post 16 education provision. This is followed by a description of the main features of the governance, management and staffing.

#### **5.3.1 Thumbnail sketch**

##### **a) Positioning in the post 16 education market**

The college was located in a medium-sized town. There was one main campus and several 'drop-in' open learning centres around the area, which were dedicated to adult learners on short courses. It had approximately 5,000 students including approximately 250 students on Work Based Learning courses for apprenticeships and 3,500 students aged 16-19 years, who attended full time. Educational provision covered 14 of the Ofsted categories. Just under 50% of the student body followed vocational courses, and, in one vocational area, there was a Centre of Vocational Excellence (COVE). There was provision for students with learning difficulties but the college did not cater for the most severely disabled. The emphasis tended to be on the delivery of academic science and humanities programmes and over 50% of students followed courses in these, at level three and with learners studying at level 2 making up most of the rest of the student body. A strong HE department had recently been developed and there were approximately an additional 1,000 adult students on HE programmes. The most recent full Ofsted report rated the college as very good overall.



Within the catchment area, there were a dozen schools and community colleges, all running very small sixth forms (fewer than 50 students), following on from their GCSE programmes or vocational equivalents, at levels one and two. There were two competitor FE colleges within the immediate neighbourhood. These competed for the available 16-19 year old 'A level' and vocational students, and one independent school competed for 'A level' students. When performance in 'A levels' by college B was compared with the other providers, it is a very close second to the independent school and vastly outperformed both the other GFECs, the community colleges and schools in the area.

#### b) Management and organisational features

The college enjoyed a very stable leadership over the last 15 years. The Principal worked with four long standing Vice Principals who made up the Senior Management Team (SMT). The HR department was run by an 'Officer' who was, unusually, not a member of the SMT and non routine or legal issues concerning employment matters were outsourced to a local firm of solicitors. The Clerk to the Board of Governors worked part-time and did not have a dedicated office or a secretariat. The college was run according to the Carver Model of Governance, as advocated by the AoC, and had a range of committees, including a Personnel Committee. Overall responsibility for appointment and dismissal of staff was allocated, through the 'Scheme of Delegation', to the College Principal. The governors met lecturers at annual training on the governors' 'away day' and individual governors shadowed allocated teaching teams. The Principal meets all new staff on a one-to-one basis when they joined and appeared to know the lecturers by name. The Board was concerned with the extensive ongoing investment in the improvement of the main campus, to provide better facilities for learners and to expand accommodation to cater for increasing HE student numbers.

#### c) Lecturers and managers

The staff body was stable and turnover rates, for both academic and support workers, were consistent at a very small percentage per year. Many middle and senior managers had been internally promoted and had worked in the college, with the same Principal, for a substantial number of years. This meant that there was a very stable core of managers and lecturers with a very small peripheral group of part timers in all teams. Often new recruitment was made from part-time members of staff who become full-timers. In effect many lecturers started in a small way, contracted for a few hours per week to their

department. There was no employment agency engaged by the corporation. The majority of lecturers had teaching qualifications (more than 95%). In total, there are approximately 1,500 academic members of staff (700 FTE). The staff considered themselves to be well paid and have less workload, as compared to other lecturers in near by colleges and they knew that their college was comparatively financially sound. They also regarded their college as very successful and effective at delivering good results for students, year on year.

Lecturers were assigned to one of 12 teaching teams, with a Head of Team (HTT) and several deputies (DHTT). The HTTs were directly managed by the Vice Principal in charge of 'Curriculum Delivery'. The staff induction process emphasised the role of the other members of the teaching team as a source of information and support for the newcomer, in addition to the formal processes that were organised and monitored by the management. The induction programme was spread out across the first term and was managed by the newcomer's line manager and the Staff Development Manager (SDM). Within the first few days of arrival, each newcomer had an induction from the HR Department and was assigned a mentor. The mentor role was part of the DHTT job specification and usually, the mentor was an established Deputy from the newcomer's team. During the first term, the newcomer had a formal teaching observation, which formed part of the probationary procedure. After the probation period, an annual appraisal cycle commenced and was carried out by the lecturer's immediate line manager. The Staff Development Manager reviewed all annual appraisals, and in particular, followed up initial teacher training for the few lecturers who were unqualified when they joined the college.

### **5.3.2 Vignettes in college B**

The findings in college B are presented in two vignettes. Firstly, 'key skills' and secondly, 'Moodle' are used to compare and contrast the responses. A comparison is made between lecturers and managers, and in addition the responses of novice lecturers and experienced lecturers are presented. The vignettes offer a platform from which the analytical themes can be further explored in this case study.

### **5.3.3 Vignette 1: Implementation of the key skills initiative**

a) Managers talking about key skills

*'.. the new key skills came in 2000 and we took a different approach. We appointed a Key Skills Coordinator and the idea was that key skills was still mapped to the curriculum and evidence was gathered from existing work. It didn't work, staff felt they couldn't cope with something extra, on top of their subject area. We weren't getting achievements. It was a dirty word in the college. In 2004 we made a different move and we made a temporary secondment to one of our managers'.*

*'It's been very hard and I think, it's not perfect, but it's a darned sight better than it was four years ago..... Students are no where near as negative as they towards this word, key skills'. (VP)*

*'I wouldn't say we've gone mad [about the key skills initiative] ....I think that's something about this institution, it's about being sensible and realistic in approaching things, rather than jumping on a band wagon and going mad on something.' (VP)*

*'There are certain initiatives that have been dealt with almost seamlessly. One was key skills. There were colleges .... who took it unduly seriously and imposed an immense and unreasonable burden on lecturers, somehow to, for instance, to assess IT competence in the middle of A level Eng Lit classes, which was not what A level Eng Lit was designed for at all. Fortunately this college fell into neither extreme, we had KS, which students who wished for them, could claim.' (OB HTT)*

*'We did enough, but from the point of view of ordinary members of staff, apart from one badly received development day when the team was in embryonic form and somebody from outside the college came and told us how seriously we had to take it, after that, it transmogrified.'*

*'You had KS, core skills, functional skills, this skills, that skills. At the end of the day I'm still teaching XXX. I think the senior managers here help to deflect unnecessary admin from staff and I hope I do the same thing.' (OB HTT)*

b) Experienced lecturer talking about key skills

*'The role that key skills takes..the college is focussed on, is the IT Key Skill. So, we have a look at the IT skills of students and qualifications they've got in IT when they come in and they have an additional lesson a week, if they need to top up their IT skills.'*

*'I think I'm right in saying that we haven't really touched on the other three key skill areas, as a college. I would assume that ILP is one of the roles that comes in via the tutor learning programme. So, we do study skills, note taking and various ways that individuals can improve. On the pastoral side of things, rather than the subject side.' (MT experienced)*

This first vignette is presented here to show how one initiative, key skills, was introduced and show accounts of the college's response to the key skills agenda, as initiated under Curriculum 2000 reforms. The vignette serves as a basis around which to discuss the issues of work intensity, work content, work orientation and college organisation on this site. The role of managers in trying to protect their staff from unnecessary burdens becomes apparent.

The confinement of key skills to the periphery of lecturers' attentions, suggests that the content of the job and range of work tasks demanded of the lecturer, were focussed narrowly on the delivery of teaching course subject matter. The impact of key skills on the college environment was moderated by managers' interventions such as: detailed planning, reforming an original college scheme that imposed impossible demands and through 'not going mad' on the initiative. Initiatives, such as key skills, although present in the college and available to students, were not allowed to distract staff or students from their primary learning purpose. Key skills were treated with a degree of scepticism: *'So in one sense it all changes, but it all stays the same. Most of the initiatives we don't like wash away after a while. We get...they're replaced by a new one.'* (OB HTT). This decision not to be side-tracked into chasing initiatives came from the top: *'the Principal openly boasts that he has the shortest mission statement in the sector .... because he is gloriously pragmatic, gloriously unafraid of government initiatives'* (OB HTT).

Although in this college the issue of key skills had not created an additional workload burden, the existing workload was considerable. When questioned about work load, one lecturer described it as significantly demanding throughout the academic year: *'The workload is quite heavy, although I must say that in this college we are relatively privileged,' 'I don't think it's as pressured here as in other colleges, which isn't to say that there aren't people here who suffer from stress'.* (RM experienced). Work demands also appeared to be cyclical in nature and led by the examination schedule for some staff: *'workload increases prior to exams and then significantly drops off after, when people are relaxing and just getting on with things. So, it is quite on a cycle there.'* (MT experienced).

The content of this work was largely handling matters arising from student learning problems. Experienced and novice lecturers noted that a considerable amount of their time was routinely taken up with dealing with students' problems: *'it's one of those things that*

*can expand all the time. It's not anything you can really time-table for, though. It's just an additional part of your tutor role'. 'they [students] can find you at lunchtime or break time or when the problem has happened.'* (MT experienced). A novice, after some months, found more and more of her effort is put into this: *'I probably spend less time on doing planning prep and all the teaching stuff and more time doing the tutor group, talking to people, doing the kind of things that just turn up. I definitely spend more time doing that, than I did in September.'* (GF novice).

The kinds of student problems that lecturers were presented with were relatively straight forward academic matters. Lecturers were not expected to handle difficult cases. According to this novice, when she reflected on her time on teaching practice on placement at a secondary school and compared it with her college duties, she concluded: *'It is stress that I can cope with and I can manage. It's stress about their exam results or about their course work not being done. It's not stress that someone's thrown a chair at my head or there's five 11 year olds with no home and no family...[and] there's nothing you can do. ....I feel it's quite manageable.'* (GF novice). Students' social problems were not within the lecturer's remit and were automatically passed on to the first level line manager. It was at this level of management that the fire-fighting pressures and the hurly burly of caring for students were most intensely felt: *'It is so difficult to say I'm going to achieve a, b and c...It's easy to say, but you walk in the next morning and the day goes to pieces, because stuff comes in quite asynchronously,.. that you didn't predict. Nine times out of ten they have to be dealt with there and then.'* (KK DHTT). The first level line manager effectively sheltered his lecturers from dealing with severe and complex student issues, that could have been stressful and potentially disruptive to the teaching day.

Freely giving time and putting in considerable amounts of what could be seen as extra time, was an expected part of the job for experienced lecturers: *'It's very difficult to do a good thorough job, if you don't actually put the time in to doing the support work that's necessary. You can't just walk into the room, spend an hour with the students and then go away'.* (MT experienced). A novice also shared the orientation that putting in hours was a natural part of being a teacher: *'It's a bit weird actually; a bit split, because I feel like as a teacher I'm s'posed to put extra hours in .....and that's part of the job and the other part of it I feel if I don't relax in the evenings, I can't do it.'* (GF novice). Here she was

observed reconciling the need for completing marking and preparation in the evenings, with her fatigue from having been at college all day.

On this case-study site there were no contractually set hours of daily attendance for full time lecturers or managers, similarly there were no annual teaching contact hours prescribed in the contract. Time appeared to be unregulated. However, time, meaning the hours that staff put into the students and being on site in the college, was monitored and assumed the function of indicating commitment. Staff members were expected to be present and work at full capacity: *'XX do carry out absence interviews and make staff aware of the knock on effect of their absences to the rest of the team'* (HRM). Informally, it would be noticed by a line manager when for example, a member of staff was not keeping up with the pace or not contributing as much as others: *'Inevitably some people work harder than others and I think that's part of the informal law about staff that we all bear in mind when they need a favour or some flexibility or maybe seek a promotion or a responsibility'* (OB HTT). Time was negotiated and used by managers and lecturers in such a way as not to mean enforcing the letter of the contract: *'I excused somebody from one of our open evenings, because of the amount of coursework marking they had. I realised that if the coursework wasn't marked in time that was potentially far more serious than glad handing a couple of people who we could easily glad hand ourselves'* (OB HTT). The need for a pragmatic outlook, based on taking a person centred approach that was outside of the formal policies of the institution, was central to the terms on which the lecturers and managers continue to work together: *'Personally I can't stand a cheese-paring approach to life, which lacks human generosity and ties everything up in an unduly tight structure. I have one member of staff who does cheese-paring me and .....as a result they're much unhappier than they could be if they loosened up a bit and were prepared to put out for Mama, in which case Mama would put out for them.'* (OB HTT).

The managers' approach to judging the quality of lecturers' teaching was based on an abstract notion of who was doing a good job. Thus, a good lecturer was described in nebulous terms as someone having a presence: *'You have to have a presence. I think you can learn a certain amount, but I think there are some people who don't have that ability.'* (VP). Similarly, *'My personal view is I think it's a gift, it's in the nature of the individual. I think some people can do it better than others, but I'm not sure you can do a great deal in training.'* (KK DHTT). To be able to give over this presence in teaching required

considerable abilities of personal emotional labour: *'I would like them [a good lecturer] to be like a swan, entirely tranquil on the surface, so that the students are reassured that all is going well, while paddling busily beneath the surface'* (OB HTT). *'You've got to sweep all that [what went on just before that hour] completely aside as you walk through the door, you're expected to transform'* (KK DHTT).

To comply with its audit criteria, the college had a formal system of appraisal with lesson observations carried out on an annual basis. This appeared to be quite rigorous for the new lecturer: *'My low point could be that my observations weren't very good at the beginning, I found the whole thing very stressful. I was really nervous about it and then I'd stand up and just...be an idiot.... That was quite annoying'* (GF novice). For the experienced lecturer, there was an impression of just going through the motions: *'How honest do you want me to be [about annual appraisal process]? Not a lot [of use]'*. (MT experienced). Alternatively, observations did not happen at all for one experienced lecturer: *'actually, I didn't have an observation or an appraisal last year'*. (DD experienced). Formal procedures of observations, although usually complied with as part of the duties of the manager, were regarded as fairly superfluous to the competent line manager: *'Lesson observation, quite frankly, with a team that is working well you don't need to do lesson observations. You know what's happening in the classrooms'* (KK DHTT). *'It's a little bit Darwinian, I think, one, despite all the structures and all the assessment processes, one does work out how people are coping fairly early on'* (OB HTT).

The use of other formal procedures, such as disciplinary or competency policies to tackle poor performance, were avoided at all costs, because there was an assumption that all lecturers had integrity and wished to do a good job: *'I think it's in the nature of our profession....most cases where people are incompetent, they recognise it and they require support and they're prepared to undertake supportive activities.'* (OB HTT). The use of formal competency procedures was frowned upon by managers: *'we don't go around threatening those formal routes and I generally feel the motivation and the morale and the professionalism of staff here is such that in most cases there's no need to.'* (OB HTT).

The positive atmosphere set by the Principal was praised by the management spine interviewees as conducive to getting on well with staff. However, there still existed a well established difference between lecturers and managers and there was a clearly spelt out line

of authority: *'senior managers or even... the Principal, and I suppose it is only right, they will always back the manager'* (RM experienced). *'The college is never very willing at all to censure somebody that they have appointed to a management post. ...college will never say "we have appointed the wrong person here and it is our fault" or whatever'.* (RM experienced). It was very much understood that lecturers had their place and the college had had incidents that did not completely support the image of a positive working atmosphere: *'If you don't [get on with the line management] life can be very difficult, and of course.... it can go to the very extreme where XX was taking them to an employment tribunal over sex discrimination, but they settled with him out of court. It was kept hush hush'.* (RM experienced).

In the first vignette, the senior manager remarked on the special feature of the institution as refraining from *'jumping on a band wagon'* and *'being sensible and realistic'*. This realism was likewise observed in not tying the college up in bureaucracy, by carrying out formal policies: observations, appraisals of lecturers' performance, use of competency or disciplinary action and in not 'clocking' staff in and out of work everyday. The efforts of managers to shelter staff as far as possible from external government initiatives, like key skills, that potentially created diversions from teaching, were extensive: placing responsibility for fire fighting at first line manager level and wide use of discretion over lecturers' use of time. These reportedly contributed to a situation in which managers felt that the lecturers believed that they were being cared for and, hence, wanted to do their best for the college: *'I think the Principal is very keen on setting a positive work atmosphere. Staff are paid well in the college. All these things make staff think, "well they do look after us here". "If the college looks after me, I really want to look after the college"'*. (SDM). Similarly, this Head of Team believed there was a high level of mutual trust: *'As a manager, if you build a relationship of trust with your team that persuades them that you're not out to exploit them in any way... you can.....[get on]'* (OB HTT).

The atmosphere of a collegiate, supportive work environment was the result of considerable effort by managers regarding the ways in which lecturers were proactively sheltered from additional duties. However, in spite of the best efforts of line managers and senior managers to avoid the worst, some external demands had seeped into the college and workloads had increased. The impact of the additional demands was seen in one major change brought about in the workroom environment, namely, the absence of Heads of



Teams. As these managers were tied up with administration and meetings, they didn't have time to spend with their team. It may be surmised that the sense of collegiality had suffered. One experienced lecturer identified a growing gap between lecturers and managers: *'[If there is a problem] you'll need to go and see him and you only tend to do that for major things. So, if a problem arises then that gets discussed'* (MT experienced). She noted that encouragement and the personal touch that managers used to bring to the workroom had been lost: *'We haven't been getting as much informal feedback from the management structure, as we did, say, five years ago, but I think that's due to pressures of work at other levels as well. XX's very snowed under, so he won't pop down and say, "Oh that was a really good thing you did with such and such"'*. (MT experienced).

### 5.3.4 Vignette 2: Introducing Moodle - the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)

#### a) Managers talking about Moodle

*'I don't like to tell people to do things, I like to ask them. If I had something that I thought was a very good idea and I thought people should do it, I'd prove to them that it works. Moodle is a perfect example of people saying, "no" and they've been converted.'* (SDM)

*'A huge number of staff said, "no" and now the majority say, "yes" and those who are saying, "no" are beginning to get round to it. I think when people say, "no", you prove to them that no is the wrong answer. Moodle is a very good example of this and it's now part of staff development. If we try and prove it to them and they still say, "no", then they've probably got a valid reason for it, but generally we prove that they should say, "yes."'* (SDM)

*'We also have Moodle. So, we have two e-learning support staff, who support staff and will put all their learning resources [on it] ...they[staff] don't have to know the nuts and bolts of it, but you can all share resources, so all the course notes are available to students.'* (HR)

#### b) Experienced lecturer talking about designing Moodle resources for the department

*'So, a group of us learned how to use, how to design our own area within that. So, we've actually spent a lot of time last year putting all of our electronic resources onto Moodle. So, that's one thing we did, working together as a department.'*

*'We needed to get the resource based stuff on there. That was a bit intensive, but it has paid off and we're all using it now and the students are using it.'* (RM experienced).

The virtual learning environment (VLE), Moodle, was presented as a platform on which to discuss collaborative processes in learning at work. This collaboration took place against the backdrop of a workplace environment, in which being sensible and taking a realistic approach, formed the organisational approach towards central government initiatives. Moodle was promoted as a positive addition to the teaching repertoire of lecturers and a resource which the college was willing to take on, invest in and develop. The Moodle infrastructure was provided by the senior management team employing technicians to set up the 'nuts and bolts' systems. Then lecturers were persuaded to adopt Moodle by colleagues, and most significantly, through the sharing of responsibilities to establish the online materials for different disciplines. There was no compulsory element to VLE training and lecturers were subtly and gradually converted to using Moodle as an effective and popular way, through which to integrate the VLE into their lessons. After two years development, Moodle had reached the tipping point of being an expected and everyday element in students' learning experiences, thus, developing a Moodle resource for a programme area had now become standard for staff.

The learning at work going on in the college demonstrated an awareness, by senior managers, of the need for fostering both the tacit and explicit dimensions of lecturers' knowledge. For formal training in explicit skills, the college provided a schedule of staff development days each year. These days' schedules were drawn up by a committee, consisting of managers and lecturers, who select ideas from information gathered from staff annual review requests and from the senior management requirements, that tended to reflect central government initiatives and recent legislative developments. Lecturers also attended external events run by examination boards and subject specific governing bodies, for updates on curricula. The usual way in which this knowledge base was capitalised on formally was to deploy first level line managers, who were very experienced and

accomplished lecturers, to mentor newcomers, regardless of whether they were novices or experienced lecturers.

The complexities of enhancing workplace knowledge, including informal learning processes, were recognised. Informal learning was facilitated by the campus organisation. All subject teachers, whether they were academic or vocational teachers, were roomed in the same workroom, along with the few part timers who worked for each department: *'you do tend to find that these members of staff share the same workroom i.e. all the [our subject] lecturers are in the same workroom. So, colleagues discussing progress etc, is more of an informal process'* (SDM). Owing to this arrangement, opportunities taken by staff for sharing were commonplace: *'If I walk around the college, I see it happening. I see people doing that. I don't see it happening everywhere all the time, but I do.....what I do see is people working and somebody else looking over their shoulder and thinking, "Oh, that's a good idea"'* (VP). Lecturer grade colleagues felt under an obligation to help others out on an informal basis: *'When I joined the college, the amount of support I got, I feel that is my job to give that back'* (SDM). The casual nature of the arrangements for sharing ideas and encouraging feedback to colleagues was seen as an asset in staff development processes: *'we've been trying to avoid formalising too many things, because informally it works so well. The minute you ask for too much paperwork and too much proof of this and that, things don't happen so much'* (SDM).

This pragmatic approach to the passing on of knowledge was based on the understanding that the lecturer was responsible enough towards his/her colleagues and could be trusted to share new knowledge. The discretionary approach taken to the spreading of knowledge, for example setting up Moodle as the VLE, was consistent with the attempts to engage the spirit of college policies and develop reciprocity between managers and lecturers, as described in the first vignette. The proof that staff development, for example mentoring, was being carried out effectively was gathered through the 'hands on' involvement of senior management, in listening to word of mouth feedback and not through a paper chase, for example: *'Each year the Principal sees new members of staff in the autumn term and in the spring term, to see how things have gone'*. (VP).

Running parallel to the notion of the collective approach to improvement, there remained the central government (macro) led demand for excellence. Although policy initiatives may

come and go, there was a necessity for the college to be seen to be effective in the commercial world of FE. This was reflected at ground level in lecturers being made more accountable for their teaching, through monitoring of retention and achievement targets: *'I think when we're talking about retention, we're talking about success rates, we're tracking it back to classes and in some cases, you can look at class where person x has taught a class and person y has taught a class.... Retention is dreadful and success rates are appalling. So, I think lecturers have to be more accountable'*. (VP). The awareness of systems used to measure value added was an additional burden and form of monitoring put on the lecturer: *'So, we're not just looking at assessing our classes at the end of the year, which was one of the initial things that we were all doing, but now looking at whether or not they've improved from what their GCSE scores would predict them to get.'* (MT experienced). This was a source of stress and dissatisfaction for the lecturer: *'People are all very stressed, because they are being pushed all the time to fulfil goals and the goals all are to do with the college being able to tick all the boxes'*. (RM experienced).

At the corporate level, it was recognised that organisational systems needed to be constantly improved upon and quality delivered. The emphasis was on the grass roots to come up with innovations: *'Their [i.e. senior management team] door is always open, they're always approachable. It's quite a flat structure, it's not a hierarchical structure.'* (HRM). One example of quality assurance was given as follows: *'On Monday we had a management meeting and one of the management team said, "I want to tell you all about an idea that's come from one of my team. It's a change to something on the attendance data on the MIS system and I think it'll really help you". She said, "it's been done".'* (VP). The long term planning for college development actively included lecturers and support staff so that they understood the need to secure its market share of students and ensure corporate financial security: *'The encouragement for innovation comes from the top. So, the Principal will speak to all staff three times a year and he will encourage ideas and innovation.'* (VP). An example of college development had been innovation at level 4 and expansion into community based HE, through Foundation Degrees: *'we have moved on. ....we had no HE and now it's a big part of our organisation. So, anybody who is interested in ....is interested in a new Foundation Degree, would go and see a Vice Principal and be given....Once they've got the idea and they see it's feasible, then we would support them with that. So, you've no doubt seen our FDs have grown and expanded'* (VP).

The five themes of work intensity, work quality, work orientation, work organization and learning for work have been considered in relation to college B. A concluding comment on the work environment of the college was offered by a senior manager: *'What I've noticed is that over the years, the job, the focus is different in that you don't get.....if we have events here at the college, if we have student events, if we have theatre productions etc, you don't see lots of staff at them. Whereas years ago, you used to. I don't know why that is.'* (VP). It would appear that the co-operation engineered by managers, through the subtle creation of a positive collegiate atmosphere was, nonetheless, over shadowed by some lecturers' underlying awareness of their situation in the calculative, contractually driven environment of the college workplace.

In this college the protection afforded to staff against the impact of external demands, that often appeared as new initiatives created by macro level policy makers, was considerable. The issue of key skills showed how the initiative was carefully dealt with to minimise the consequences for teaching staff. However, not all initiatives could be totally excluded from the college and the senior managers had not entirely prevented the gradual increase of workload that had occurred for lecturers and line managers. The degree and the rate of workload increase in the college had been moderated by senior managers, through engaging with initiatives and then making realistic judgements over how best to handle them.

## **5.4 College C**

Here the findings from college C are presented. The first section introduces the situation of the GFEC in its local community and the local competition it faces in the pseudo market for post 16 education provision. This is followed by a description of the main features of the governance, management and staffing.

### **5.4.1 Thumbnail sketch**

#### **a) Positioning in the post 16 education market**

College C had several main campuses, including two 6<sup>th</sup> form centres. It ran approximately 20 out reach centres and study centres in addition to these main sites. It had more than 10,000 students, including a growing number of HE learners who were taught on two of the sites. The breakdown of the students showed that approximately 50% of them were

enrolled on level 1 courses, just over 20% are at level 2, and 20% at level 3. Of the lattermost, only a small proportion studied academic 'A level' programmes. The remaining 10% were on short community or professional courses, were overseas students on short programmes or were studying in the HE part of the college. When the performance of the small group of 'A level' candidates was compared with the performance of the various school sixth forms and community colleges in the neighbourhood, college C ranked equally well. When compared with an independent school and the other two FE college competitors, it did not perform well and ranked last.

The college provided programmes in all of the Ofsted areas. Teaching programmes were sometimes replicated on the different campuses. For example, Business Studies although one academy, operated through a number of departments, so that students could access the programmes at their local campus. It was a very large institution with a diverse student body for which the college delivered courses that ranged from e.g. level one in animal husbandry to post graduate level accountancy training programmes. It was spread over a wide area. This pattern of provision reflected the origins of the college, namely, that this institution was the product of mergers of free standing colleges, at the time of incorporation and in the years since. At the last Ofsted inspection the college was awarded an overall grade 3 (satisfactory).

#### b) Management and organisational features

The college did not run along the lines of the Carver Model of Policy Governance. Instead it had a Governance Committees system, whilst its trading company was operated as an entirely separate entity. There were two types of Governance Committees, firstly those dealing with the accountability of the college to the LSC and secondly, committees that handled the day to day running of the corporation. The Personnel Committee was one of the latter. Through the Scheme of Delegation, the appointment and dismissal of staff was allocated to the Principal. One of the concerns of the Board of Governors was to deal with the constant development and improvement of campus sites, particularly in the area of HE, as this was where the student numbers showed most growth. At each of the campuses there was a campus senior manager, but the main Management Team was located on one campus, whilst the Clerk to the Corporation, Human Resources, Quality Assurance and MIS departments were to be found on other sites. The Clerk was a full time employee with a background in public administration, the HR Director was recruited from a blue chip

commercial company and the Principal was formerly a senior manager at a higher education institution.

#### c) Lecturers and managers

There are 1,700 FTE members of staff, which translated into several thousand people employed in the college. A range of temporary and casual contracts were offered to employees, and there was a high rate of turnover amongst these lecturers, but less turnover, a few percentage per year, amongst permanent appointees. Full-time members of staff were put into fixed point (banded) pay groups and thus only received annual cost of living wage rises. The lecturers did not regard themselves as well paid as staff in competitor local GFECs nor as having the favourable terms and conditions that local school teachers enjoyed. They knew that the college faced financial problems most of the time and did not regard the college's financial management as particularly robust.

When members of teaching staff joined the college, there was a programme for induction, namely, a corporate induction, an induction to their campus and then an orientation by their immediate line manager. Approximately 60% of the college teaching staff had teaching qualifications and enrolling on initial teacher training was an obligation for unqualified newcomers. A lecturer worked in a team, in which there was a Head of Teaching Team and several Deputies. Line management appeared to be in a state of constant flux, with appointments to these key positions, usually from outside the corporation, occurring on a regular basis. All the Heads of Teaching Teams worked under a Director, who in turn, was responsible to one of the two Vice Principals.

#### **5.4.2 Vignettes in college C**

The findings in college C are presented in two vignettes. Firstly, there is that of 'staff training and development' and secondly, 'co-operation and communication' and they are used to compare and contrast the responses. A comparison is made between lecturers and managers, and in addition the responses of novice lecturers and experienced lecturers are presented. The vignettes offer a platform from which the themes can be further explored in this case-study.

#### **5.4.3 Vignette 1: Staff training and continuing professional development (CPD)**

a) Manager talking about training and development

*'.....the one thing we've made compulsory this year, because it's legally compulsory, is the Every Child Matters 'ECM' training and it's proving interesting, because for the first time there's some compunction....*

*The hard core of people who do not like training events, have said "why can't we just have it online? Why can't we just have a handout?" It's a minority ....but we do get quite a bit of that.*

*Its persuasion first, it is trying to sell them the idea. It's very much persuasion, but then it will come down to the bottom line .. we have to do it. We won't pass Ofsted if they don't. They can express their different academic point of view, but if Ofsted say this is how you have to behave, then we have to do it. To be honest, it is Ofsted that rules all at the end of the day. If it's okay with Ofsted, it's okay with us'. (SDM)*

b) Experienced lecturer talking about training and development

*'I think things are just more controlled now. You have to do things in a certain way. I think there's an increased atmosphere of supervision. You've got to stick by the rules. They expect you in at 8.30am and not out till 4.30pm. Things have tightened up a hell of a lot. [Now]....we've all been told that during the Christmas holidays we have to go for child protection training, apparently it's the law if they're under 18. We have to be made aware of child protection regulations'. (HN experienced lecturer).*

The above vignette is introduced to discuss the themes of learning for work, work content and work organisation in College C. The starting point is the government legislation that has been made part of inspection and introduced throughout colleges as the ECM initiative. By remarking on the nature of attendance i.e. that it is mandatory for lecturers, this compulsion appeared to be a new phenomenon in the workplace for the lecturer. Lecturers' time was becoming more intensively supervised and more expectations were being made that they conformed to college 'rules', specifically regarding training. In the vignette, not only was the lecturer resentful of the incursion into his holiday time, he had also been given little explanation of the purpose of the training, and thus saw it as a nuisance and an imposition. The training that was to be provided on ECM seemed to bear down on the lecturer as a negative irrelevance, neither supporting nor enhancing his practice nor the practice of his colleagues. A degree of resentment was expressed by another experienced colleague, who found some of the procedures he got training in fairly limited: *'I think, well it would be nice if these people had a bit more informed knowledge about the reality of the*



*job*'. (BU experienced). These top down initiatives that he was being trained in were seen to contribute nothing to his job: *'an irritation is where one is forced to adhere to some procedure, the value of which is, you think at best debatable'*, and, he evidently believed that some of these procedures hinted at a performativity driven management agenda: *'the emphasis is on greater visibility, accountability, performance criteria being employed to assess the performance of individual lecturers or individual programmes'* (BU experienced).

In the vignette the statement from the SDM showed awareness of the difficulties of getting staff to co-operate and participate in training. The initiative under discussion was the first time that training attendance had been made compulsory, in order to conform to new legislation and Ofsted demands. Up until this point, CPD had been optional, with the matter devolved to Heads of Teaching Teams (HTTs): *'in general we just allow our teachers to do anything, they can even not be here [for training days]'* (SDM). Further to this and in relation to other activities, the SDM was aware that lecturers were refusing to support the organisation beyond their contracted hours and to perform duties outside of their perceived job description: *'when people are working from home, in some instances they are rude to business staff who phone them at home...How it's got to this war of attrition is history really'*. (SDM). The resentment noticed in the comments of the lecturer: *'A sort of feeling that you're not to be trusted unless somebody's watching you'* (HN experienced), may have been as a result of the attempts by managers to place some sort of control over the staff. Managers were working hard to gain control: *'It's very laissez-faire and although a lot of people are working very hard, its not necessarily at the right things....It's very difficult to impose management after having none for so long'* (SDM). From such narratives, it appeared that the failure of management to engage with teaching staff appeared to foster resistance amongst the lecturers.

Intervention by managers was necessary, but the management systems were convoluted and somewhat removed, both physically and organisationally, from the everyday operations in the college. As the following illustrates, current systems were considered unproductive. A line manager described how he provided training after observing a member of his staff teach a difficult topic in a *'really really clever'* fashion: *'I decided that we were going to do it for us and we just did it. It's too much hassle to go through the curriculum development route'*. (OR DHTT). This event was outside of the formally

arranged college CPD and remained covertly contained within the specific team: *'We do not get invited to put on things [but] we used to. It's all given to us now ...it comes from a higher agenda and so we have things like ..how funding mechanisms work, the ECM agenda, that sort of stuff'*. (OR DHTT). This again serves to support the view that management was somewhat out of touch.

Alongside CPD, training and development in this college included induction and mentoring procedures. When a newcomer joined the college, he/she should have followed a series of induction procedures. The commitment to induction and arranging mentors for experienced and novice newcomers was, in theory, very strong but in practice, very patchy: *'no I never had any formal induction, whatsoever. I knew where to go [on my first day]. [But] I hadn't a clue...I didn't know anything. I didn't know about the systems, I didn't know how they worked, apart from what I'd gleaned from my own investigations. I was never shown...and to this day some of the things I don't know.'* (TC experienced). The SDM regretted that induction could be a very poor experience for newcomers and that it did not give them a good first impression of the college, as a good and well organised employer committed to looking after its staff: *'if people got genuine and proper induction, then...every person had a really good quality experience, in the long run that would be so much better and we might retain more people. So, we wouldn't need to induct so many'* (SDM).

Likewise, when a novice joined the college, he/she had to enrol on a formal teaching qualification (ITT), in order to pass the probationary period. This was integral to the induction process into the college: *'they should attend the new teacher training module before they start teaching and they should be enrolled on the PGCE/Cert Ed.'* (SDM). Although on paper, the college's commitment to ITT was strong, and the commitment of novices likewise, the disorganisation in making appointments and inconsistencies in job contracts, had disappointed one novice who wanted to become qualified: *'I fell a cropper on one issue 'cause they changed my job description in my first year, twice.'* (IB novice). There appears to have been considerable variation in the support given to individual lecturers, whilst they were undertaking their ITT qualification: *'I need to get [peer] observations in and to actually say: "please may I leave for an hour to go and sit in a classroom?" and I really have to do a sort of political negotiation before [i.e. getting permission] to go. I haven't done that [peer observation] one yet'* (IB novice). The SDM

confirmed that: *'It's very very variable as to which departments will genuinely give remission to staff for attending'* (SDM).

Lack of central control over the individual departmental approaches to staff development was evident. The power of the HTTs to override the proposals for induction, mentoring and teacher training, made it difficult for practitioners to get what the college said they required with any consistency: *'In theory yes, [HTTs are compelled to give remission], but in practice it would require the member of staff to go over their boss [HTT] and complain, which can be very difficult because the HTT has immense control over how the work goes....'* (SDM). To accommodate the refusals of HTTs, the individual lecturer was left to use his or her own time: *'teachers are very professional and they can see the problems it would cause in their department, in some instances, if they said "whatever, I'm going". They see the strain it puts on their colleagues. So, often teaching staff will attend in the evening, in their own time, with no remission'* (SDM). This shows that the SDM appreciated the 'free' time given to personal and professional development by some staff. As for why the HTTs did not follow the policies on induction and mentoring, the explanation was given as: *'Those who don't [support staff to attend training] is mainly due to time constraints, so they tell us [the Senior Management Team]'* (SDM). Here, the central organisation seemed to be unable to make the departmental managers (HTTs) 'fall into line' with the policies and procedures that had been agreed by senior managers. When the HTTs do not work with the Senior Management Team, the obligation was shifted down to the lecturers, who are left trying to reconcile two sets of demands, that is, keeping their HTT happy and complying with the training policy set by the college organisation.

#### **5.4.4 Vignette 2: Co-operation and communication**

##### **a) Manager talking about co-operation and communication**

*'The HR Director...was stunned that some people didn't have their CRB [Criminal Records Bureau] check filled in. I think there had been about 10 lost by Personnel. But some people say 'I've done one, why should I do another one?' It's really an entrenched attitude. He ended up having to go out to their homes with the forms and say "would you fill this in for me please?" Now he has 100% compliance'. (HR Assistant Manager)*

##### **b) Lecturers talking about co-operation and communication**

*'It has taken me 2 years but I have now got my college [email] account. So I do get emails e.g. fire alarm not working this morning....irrelevant! Sometimes I come into the college and I don't even know who the top cheese is....I have an email from a certain name and I think 'who's that?', I wouldn't know them if they came up and bit me!'* (HE novice)

*'I said if any one of the quality people from here come in and observe me doing a lesson, they will grade me at a 4 because I could not grade myself any better. And I said "what do I do about that?" I said "who do I go to about that?" and my boss just said to me, he turned round [and said] "oh you can blame me". I said "what do you mean 'blame you? I can't blame you, so what do I do?" "oh well, you know, you'll just have to cope.....you have to get on with it". Nobody will ever take responsibility for something going wrong...they just don't want to know.'* (TC experienced)

*'You start to do something in the way you think is what's required and then suddenly, there's a change and you have to reorient yourself and so you're almost operating in a state of flux....[With] a degree of ambiguity, conflicting expectations from different but arguably key stakeholders. So [you have to] try and keep as many plates spinning at the same time.'*

(BU experienced)

The vignette addressing co-operation and communication is discussed here to illustrate the three themes of work intensity, work organisation and work orientation. In this second vignette, the nature of the poor communication in the college was alluded to by the story about the HR Director, who in his senior role, found himself performing the menial task of hunting down the legally required CRB forms from a handful of recalcitrant lecturers. He had to fire-fight the emergency of the CRB checks and both the managers and lecturers involved in this poorly organised process had to expend extra effort in resolving the crisis, which created unnecessary additional workload.

From the vignette statements, it would appear that such fire-fighting happened quite frequently, owing to the poor exchange of information. Consequently, lecturers were put under considerable pressure to sort out difficulties and deal with adverse situations on an ad hoc basis: *'I came to teach the class and [campus] was closed. We were still going because we were revising for exams and [it was half term] .....We were the only ones in [the building] and we were in the basement as well. [Later on] we thought we had got locked in!!* (HE novice). Similarly, in another department, one lecturer talked about a

situation he had had to handle: *'We were suddenly made aware, that afternoon, that there was a course coming up for the Thursday i.e. the day after the conference day.... And I worked, after a whole day of [being at a] conference, I worked from 7pm 'til midnight sorting that course out'* (TC experienced). The narrative evidence suggests that even in the event of a personal crisis, management expected members of staff to continue their daily routines. One example of this was when a lecturer was informed that a close colleague/friend had died, and she was not offered any practical or teaching cover support, in spite of her distress: *'It's my very good friend that died that I worked with for XX years and you have to just keep standing in front of the classroom and doing your stuff. Even on the day we were told she had died, half an hour later I was standing in the classroom teaching. That's what you have to do'* (SE experienced).

Another good illustration of miscommunication between lecturers and management can be seen when the notion of what it means to be flexible is considered. Both managers and lecturers identified similar qualities to define good practice, such as: caring for students, having up to date subject knowledge and in particular, having a flexible attitude towards the job. For example, the HR Assistant Manager suggested: *'to put their students first, [then] they need to be flexible to a certain extent'*. Similarly, an experienced lecturer stated: *'You have to be very flexible and I think that's both the joy and responsibility to get it right.'* (BU experienced). When this term 'flexible' is investigated in more detail, it transpires that it is subject to differing interpretations. These different interpretations of 'flexible' collided when, for example, administration was apparently prioritised by managers, whilst the lecturer actively prioritised her subject knowledge: *'Last year we were reprimanded if there was one zero or one line wrong on your register. That appears to be more important than "does SE have enough time for her to check what the new legislation in 2007 is actually going to mean for her teaching when it comes out?"'* (SE experienced). The lecturer appears to resent the fact that she was being taken away from her students, whilst the manager would possibly have argued that the classroom teaching activity was only a small part of the role of lecturer. The 'flexible lecturer', from the point of view of the managers, should have understood that both tasks, i.e. administration for tracking purposes and the classroom teaching, were criteria against which the college was measured and thus, had to be carried out: *'if Ofsted say this is how you have to behave, then we have to do it'*. (SDM).

A further example of a failure in communication, which in turn contributed to a breakdown in co-operation, was the misunderstanding that surrounded the issue of improving the quality of the college. The outcome of improving what the college did and how it served its students seemed to be mutual goals for managers and staff. Senior managers wanted to improve the college, so as to provide a better service: *'At the moment the college is coasting and it's not good enough. He [the principal] desperately wants to change us into a grade 1 or 2 Ofsted college. He does seem to believe passionately in quality. He's said quite clearly, even if it's at the expense of numbers, he's not bothered about that'* (HR Assistant Manager). Likewise, some lecturers wanted students to have a better experience: *'the people really want to teach well'* (OR DHTT). As part of the drive towards a successful college, lesson observations and delivering on initiatives, such as learning styles and skills for life, were now part of the lecturer's duties. However, it appears that sometimes, instructions from management were not communicating what was required from whom. Given the lack of leadership, lecturers were put into the situation of being the decision makers about what was essential and what could be ignored, which obviously varied from individual to individual: *'In part I think it's trying to work out what people expect and trying to keep abreast of new developments'* (BU experienced). In particular, concerning initiatives, there was evidence of new ones being constantly superimposed on older ones: *'one has conflicting initiatives....., one's not entirely sure what the initiative is supposed to achieve'* (OR DHTT). This fundamental miscommunication contributed to the state of organisational confusion, which in turn created opportunities for some lecturers to opt out of their full corporate responsibilities. The experienced lecturer suggested that such weak direction from middle managers would no longer be tolerated by senior management: *'I think that early signs suggest that there may be fewer places to hide'* (BU experienced).

The overriding issue behind poor communication that instigates lack of effective collaboration is the issue of trust, or the lack of it, in the workplace environment. One manager recognised that trust between staff and managers was a problem: *'they [SMT] want to bring in a degree of trust. They are very keen to do it'* (HR Assistant Manager). The lack of trust was blamed on the staff: *'At the moment, there isn't that degree of professionalism [in lecturers] and it is difficult, it's chicken and egg. If you give the trust, will you then [get a professional response back]?''* (HR Assistant Manager). As has been seen above, members of staff accused various levels of management for the absence of

effective and purposeful organisation in the college. In sum, this college could be able to move towards the goal of being 'a good college'. When dialogue for joint understanding is created and the fear and blame are overcome. However as trust was interpreted instrumentally, as something that senior managers could '*bring in [to] a degree*', the goal for this college remained a very distant prospect.

The two vignettes concerned with college C have covered the five emergent themes: work intensity, work quality, work orientation and work organization and learning for work. The vignettes have illustrated areas of the college where there was inertia. The lack of cooperation and communication demonstrated here, suggests that much hinges on the low levels of effective line management in the college. It appears that generating a sense of unity of purpose amongst the lecturing staff was not easy, given the number of different locations where staff followed their own agendas and the lack of co-operation between senior and middle levels of the management hierarchy.

### **5.5 Conclusion to the chapter**

The vignettes and commentaries presented in this chapter have served two purposes. Firstly, they have opened up the colleges and give an insight to what is happening regarding practice in each site. The tone and atmosphere of each college is immediately seen through the narratives.

Secondly, the narratives are real stories that demonstrate the ways in which actors in the colleges are trying to work out the dilemmas and problems of daily practice. In colleges A and C, what emerges in the narratives is the vast gap between the intended outcomes of managers' actions and the reality of the situation in each college. The unfulfilled intentions of managers suggest that the managerial project is always work in progress in these colleges. In college B the vignettes indicate that there is far greater correspondence between managers' intentions and the resulting workplace outcomes for lecturers and students.

The analytical themes of work intensity, work content, learning for work, work orientations and work organisation have been illustrated and commented upon for each college. However, the point has not yet been reached where the research questions can be addressed. The themes that were elaborated on in the vignettes need to be synthesised.

Thus, in the next chapter a view of practice is arrived at through the conceptual dimensions of autonomy, responsibility and knowledge.



## **Chapter 6**

### **Discussion of the dimensions of practice: autonomy, responsibility and knowledge**

#### **6.1.1 Introduction to the chapter**

In the last chapter, two internal events or interactions for each of the colleges were presented by means of vignettes. These served to illustrate the internal uniqueness of how they operated. The vignettes provided contextualised snapshot illustrations of the themes of lecturers' work quality and intensity, work organisation and learning for work. The fifth theme, the work orientations of practitioners emerged as they were seen reconciling themselves to the events and interactions highlighted in the vignettes. Thus, in reconciling their actions to the situations, practitioners were exhibiting their practice as it formed, and this was reported in their narratives.

As argued in chapter 3.3, and emerged in the findings set out in the last chapter, each college presented a unique arena in which managers were translating central government policy demands and specific local factors impinging on their college into organisation specific arrangements. These organisation specific constraints have been termed the economies of performance that were generated by and reflected in managers' actions, and were negotiated by lecturers in forming their practice methodologies. The negotiations by lecturers were determined by their internal ecologies of practice, which included personal dispositions and orientations towards their students, colleagues and their work. The practice that resulted in the context of a college was the flux between these external economies of performance and internal ecologies of practice.

The next stage in this thesis is to examine the nature of the ongoing flux experienced by lecturers, by discussing the three component dimensions of practice: autonomy responsibility and knowledge, and the structural features of each college. This is presented in the light of the thematic evidence amassed earlier in chapter 5. To get a handle on how practice is arrived at it is appropriate to work with the taxonomy identified in the literature, that of Furlong et al. (2000). Moreover, the themes that emerged from the analysis, through this researcher's grounded methodology, produced a good fit with these three conceptual dimensions, namely, autonomy, responsibility and knowledge.

### **6.1.2 Chapter outline**

This chapter contextualises autonomy, responsibility and knowledge in the colleges. It addresses the negotiation and reconciliation realities, which result in the distinct practice in each college and gives comment on the state of practice on each site. In this chapter, section 6.2 discusses autonomy, section 6.3 addresses responsibility and section 6.4 discusses knowledge. In section 6.5 a summary of practice for the sites is presented.

### **6.2 The dimension of practice: autonomy**

In chapter 3.3.2, the concept of proletarianisation, as described by Derber (1983) regarding professional practitioners, was discussed. The first dimension of practitioner autonomy lost under proletarianisation was control over the technical means of work. In the FE college instance, this, it may be argued, is degraded when college managers, rather than lecturers, assume organisational decision making, allocate tasks for maximum efficiency and then measure/audit how well tasks are carried out by the lecturers. This was captured by Mather et al (2007) who described the deskilling of lecturing as a move from a craft to a factory production process.

The second dimension, suggested by Derber, entails loss of task control, which means that professional practitioners no longer enjoy the space to respond to and work with clients as they determine. In the college instance, this means that the trust, once placed on the professional practitioner to always act in the best interests of the student and for the public good, has been lost. This second dimension of autonomy has been narrowed down by Evetts to refer to the issue of a practitioner's freedom in negotiating his/her everyday interactions. This discretionary element is the degree of freedom to make decisions and recommendations according to 'clients' needs in the wider corporate, organisational and economic context' (Evetts, 2002:345).

For the purposes of the rest of this section the former type of autonomy will be referred to as technical autonomy, and the latter as discretionary autonomy.

#### **6.2.1 Autonomy in College C**

The degree of technical autonomy in college C was considered to be too extensive by the managers, in spite of the fact that the college had been incorporated and operating as a

business for many years. For this reason, it would be expected that technical autonomy would have been sufficiently curtailed by now. Lecturers were considered by managers as getting away with: coming and going as they wished (particularly during students' summer holidays), enjoying annualised hours that were not actually fulfilled by some individuals, attending or not attending mandatory staff training as they chose and delivering teaching of variable quality. The freedom of lecturers to interpret their own job contracts was well established and it was very difficult for Senior Management to change these habits: *'it has very much become 'by custom and practice'.*' (HR Assistant Manager). *'How it's got to this war of attrition is history really'.* (SDM). When managers tried to impose order, lecturers complained loudly that their time and freedom was being taken from them. As one experienced lecturer protested: *'They expect you in at 8.30am and not out till 4.30pm'.* (HN experienced).

From the management point of view, their failure to make inroads into aspects of technical autonomy, were attributed, in part, to incompetent managers who had let lecturers run amok: *'because we've had weak management up until now, both extremes [good and bad lecturers] have been allowed.'* (HR Assistant Manager). There was also a degree of blaming the staff: *'I think the other problem that we have, is we offer such low wages, that we have some people who are not professionals and we haven't always recruited people with a professional attitude'.* (HR Assistant Manager). In reply to this, lecturers rejected the allegation of unprofessionalism and blamed management for the continuing failure to turn around the chaotic situation and protect lecturers from excessive demands.

Management's failure to impose standardised work practices across all the college departments, led to the situation where the onus had fallen on staff to decide how much work they should do, in order to fulfil their contract. In one department, the lecturer was left to decide how much effort he should put into his teaching and to sort out the problems that he perceived: *'I pinged e-mails all over the place as per usual, and I said "I have no resources to help these people," I said "if, any of the quality people from here come in and observe me doing a lesson,.... They will grade me at a 4." And I said, "What do I do about that? I said, "who do I go to about that...?"'* This lecturer struggled without the positive guidance or direction from his line managers: *'my boss just said to me...he turned round... "Oh you can blame me". I said, what do you mean, blame you?'* (TC experienced). He did not cope well when direct line management was missing. In contrast, in another

department, one lecturer was very secure in the decision making and problem solving that he dealt with as a natural part of his role: *'a degree of ambiguity, conflicting expectations from different, but arguably key stakeholders. So you have to try and work out what's the best strategy, to try and keep as many plates spinning at the same time'*. In this instance, the ambiguity was not considered a negative aspect of the environment and the lecturer appeared to take pride in resolving issues and relished the opportunities he was presented with: *'you have to be very flexible and I think that's both the joy and responsibility to get it right'*. (BU experienced). Very little attention was in fact paid to SMT's instructions in his particular department. Orders passed down the line tended to be ignored and staff seemed to go about their own business, dealing with work at their own pace and setting their own priorities: *'the reality is that one has a high degree of discretion as to what you do, how you do it, who you do it with'*. (BU experienced). This lack of impact of SMT directives could be attributed, in part, to the size of the college and the multi-site nature that these managers were trying to control.

As seen in these two different departments, the lecturers had become the key decision makers as to whether they were doing a good job or not. This decision put a significant amount of pressure on the individual and lecturers responded in different ways. This created a situation where FE lecturers were self managing knowledge workers, as was the case in most colleges prior to incorporation and unfortunately, some contemporary lecturers didn't seem to be able to respond. During an earlier era, the FE lecturer was delegated a high level of self management and this made him/her somewhat akin to counterparts in the Higher Education sector, where independence regarding many duties was expected. Something seems to have shifted in the FE sector whereby, nowadays, a large proportion of contemporary lecturers expect to be managed. As one experienced lecturer stated, in relation to novices she saw in her college, college A *'they are coming in and they haven't been in for many years, they're coming in with different preconceived ideas, they're expecting to be given SOW... and expecting to be given lesson plans... and expecting to be given resources....'* (WH experienced). Whilst remaining impartial as to which regime was most efficacious, it is clear to this researcher that there was some confusion and anxiety amongst practitioners as to what degree they should act autonomously, regarding the decision making in their practice. This level of confusion did not occur in those colleges where managers took a much more hands-on approach to dealing with the technical and discretionary autonomy of lecturers.

The immediate aim of management in college C was to stop this inertia regarding technical autonomy amongst staff. Their hope was that a goal may be reached where everyone was working in unison to improve student results and the lecturers did not disagree with this. However, better college performance was interpreted by management as meeting targets and national performance indicators, whereas for lecturers, this was read to mean being provided with the resources and time to achieve the desired result. Management expected this result to be achieved through greater flexibility of teaching staff: *'Putting your students first doesn't always mean working between nine and four Monday to Friday'* (SDM). The SMT adopted the interpretation of the job role of lecturers proposed in the 'learning professional' model (Guile and Lucas 1999). The learning professional, as discussed in chapter 3.3.2, was described as being trained and skilled in a wide range of organisational tasks and putting such tasks on an equal footing to his/her classroom teaching.

In reality, the drive towards 'learning professionals' was, it appeared, only felt by lecturers when their department was the target of special attention. When a crisis such as an Ofsted inspection was not pending, departments were left to their own devices. However, under the threat of inspection, teaching staff faced severe monitoring and supervision by their own line managers and senior managers: *'people were coming in and expecting us to show them what we were doing to get us in line for Ofsted. Then we were meant to be having an internal inspection.... We seem to be constantly being inspected'*. (SE experienced). Such lecturers faced a period of unrelenting stress, workload intensification and management attention. This particular department was targeted by Ofsted following previous inspection outcomes that rated the provision as weak. Under this re-inspection scrutiny, discretionary autonomy in the classroom practice of individual practitioners was curtailed, as standards determined by Ofsted were set as the benchmark: *'They [lecturers] can express their different academic point of view, but if Ofsted say this is how you have to behave, then we have to do it'*. (SDM). This provided management's justification for some criteria being compulsory for lecturers to deliver, using standardised packages. For example, key skills/skills for life, learning styles were all seen as areas that could be delivered in a 'one size fits all' format, thus reducing the discretion of the individual practitioner.

In this targeted department, as was common with some other departments that were not being inspected, one lecturer still seemed to be left as the arbiter of whether she was doing a good job. She seemed to face a great deal of leeway that was not managed or monitored by her line manager: *'I think what happens is a lot of work doesn't get done, because you never get to the end of all the things you should do and that saddens me because we're all very conscientious.'* (SE experienced). She decided to interpret her workload this way, because her line managers omitted to tell her what to prioritise and what to stop doing. In spite of high levels of management intervention in her team, concerned with the formal benchmarking of the students' learning experiences in line with the Ofsted inspection regime, the lecturer was responsible for judging whether she had done sufficient work, because the management team did not concern themselves with this. Management appeared rarely, if ever, to give reassurance to the staff as to whether they were doing enough or performing well.

In summary, concerning technical autonomy in this college, the extent of management control was still limited and during the intervening years since incorporation little had shifted in this dimension. In the case of discretionary autonomy, the evidence suggested that lecturers enjoyed a large degree of discretion in their classroom activities. High levels of discretionary autonomy existed, because senior management seemed to be too disorganised to impose its will over the middle hierarchy of management across the multiple campuses that comprised the college and hence, over rank and file lecturers. The only time that management imposed some level of order was to manage the crisis of an impending Ofsted inspection in a departmental area. Managers, by failing to create effective systems and routinely deal with staff within these, created a situation where they didn't know how to exercise greater control. In other words, they were unable to exert more invasive control techniques, such as Moldaschl's (2002) model of coercive autonomy, as will be described below when considering college A.

### **6.2.2 Autonomy in College A**

In contrast to college C, in college A there had been a substantial move towards a state of management control over both technical autonomy, and discretionary autonomy. Regarding the issue of technical autonomy, management actions in recent years had led to the wresting of large amounts of control from teaching staff, under the guise of consultation with staff representative bodies. The SMT was able to impose new contracts,

which gave them extensive control at the technical level. Staff who refused to sign the contracts were asked to leave and consequently, the key unresolved aspect of autonomy concerns lecturers' discretionary autonomy.

The first vignette in college A showed that teaching choices for lecturers had become more restricted. Staff faced an ever widening set of prescribed Ofsted criteria and rolling out these externally set audit criteria was considered a positive move forward by management: *'the autonomy that lecturers used to have has gone and I think its right that standards have come in, because I think everyone should be working to high standards'* (HRD). Subsequently, enforcing these criteria referenced standards across the institution had been taken up enthusiastically by the training and quality managers: *'I think the SMT seem to be more interested now in identifying where the practice isn't effective and sharing good practice, in terms of making everybody more effective'* (QA Manager).

It followed from this reliance on standards that management's definition of effective classroom delivery, equated to staff deploying 'approved good practice' in their work. 'Good practice' originated at the top of the organisation and cascaded downwards via 'special' lecturers appointed as 'Teaching and Learning Champions' and 'Advanced Practitioners'. Managers were at a loss to understand why experienced lecturers did not want to be appointed to these posts or participate in the 'good practice' campaign: *'we haven't got enough teaching and learning champions out there, helping their peers'* (QA Manager), *'We've got find a way of supporting more people to come through the organisation to take on those roles'* (SDM).

The practitioner's choice of whether to use or not to use 'approved good practice' was undergoing steady erosion, with less and less room for lecturers to opt out. Managers actively disseminated to staff their ideas of 'good practice', with the aim of eradicating individuals' stores of materials and ideas: *'People keep using their own materials'* (SDM). Experienced staff were made to mix with new colleagues: *'They have kept in their little pond in their staff room'. '[Lecturers] who are heads down....they are unprofessional', 'they're not [working] SMART'* (SDM). The primary belief was that standardising teaching methods and lesson content removed poor performance from the institution. SMT, by its proactive involvement in classroom delivery, appeared to have concluded that 'practitioner discretion' was an uncontrolled negative variable, which led to poor performance and

ultimately resulted in the college's failure to meet its targets. Therefore, the management took the mechanistic perspective, that 'good practice' was to be determined by it and then disseminated downwards, throughout the college.

Eventually, it was believed that a situation would occur where all lecturers were using the approved 'off the shelf' materials in the correct way, as specified on downloadable 'one size fits all' lesson plans. The spin off would be that staff had more time available to devote to the rest of their duties in the college i.e. they would have been made effective and efficient 'learning professionals'.

The top-down relentless drive for uniform 'good practice', i.e. no discretionary elements introduced by the individual lecturer, was met with resistance from experienced lecturers. One experienced lecturer responded with scepticism: *'although they might set down objectives for use of ILT and ways that lessons might be structured, in the end, you know what works for you.'* (BS experienced). The activity in the classroom was, in the end, driven by the lecturer's own disposition and experience, regardless of the determination of managers to substantially reduce, if not eradicate such discretion. Similarly, the imposition of criteria referenced content led some experienced lecturers to incorporate such phenomena into their lessons, and still teach what they used to in less time: *'I've now squeezed down what I would have delivered in a lesson.'* (EE experienced). To make up extra time there was some evidence of lecturers using their own departmental duties non-contact time to help students: *'the students still need a significant amount of individual input.'* (BS experienced).

In contrast to his experienced colleagues, who realised that there was a battle going on over practitioner discretion, one novice claimed rather innocently that he had complete freedom over what he did in the classroom: *'As long as it works, you can do what you like'* (HM novice). In reality, this statement needed to be considered in light of the fact that this lecturer, at this time, had 32 hours contact time per week, owing to staff shortages and not one of his line managers appeared to consider that this might be inconsistent with 'good practice'. The lecturer admitted that this was impinging on his teaching standards: *'Least satisfaction is going from one lesson to another, to another, to another and not having time to prepare for it and so not giving as good a lesson as if you did have time to prepare for it'* (HM novice).



When the excessive level of the workload interfered with the quality of the lesson that the practitioner wanted to teach, as it evidently did here for the novice, discretion was not freely exercised. This situation was viewed as one of ‘coercive discretionary autonomy’, in that this lecturer’s inability to say ‘no’ to their requests to take on more classes was being exploited by his managers. Management’s apparent willingness to accept any solution to staffing shortages, regardless of questions of ethics and efficiency, led to a situation where he and his students were not protected from inappropriate practice. According to Moldaschl (2002), this unsustainable state of coercive autonomy, ultimately leads to the individual practitioner bearing the cost through his/her physical distress and mental damage.

In sum, this college site tended towards a state of ‘hard’ management control over lecturers’ technical autonomy and appeared to be making strong moves to curtail discretionary autonomy as well.

### **6.2.3 Autonomy in College B**

The previous two colleges showed the move towards a degraded state of lecturer discretionary autonomy, where the emphasis was on the desired use of ‘off the shelf’ lesson delivery, as opposed to lecturers’ exerting judgement over their teaching. In college B a vast difference to this approach emerged. Here, the issue of technical autonomy was not a problem, as the Principal promoted a culture of lecturers being trusted, self managing professionals and this view percolated down through all levels of management. The preservation and extension of lecturers’ discretionary autonomy was actively encouraged by managers in their college departments.

The role of the individual lecturer as an autonomous being, free to work how he/she wished with his/her students within the parameters of his/her teaching role, was highly valued. The nebulous, unquantifiable attribute of ‘presence’ was cited as the indicator of talent: ‘*You have to have a presence*’ (VP). The abstract quality of ‘presence’ was not defined much beyond some general attributes that were offered by one HTT: ‘*the most important criteria for determining whether someone can teach are: do you know the stuff and can you get on with the students and that covers an immense range*’ (OB HTT). The HTT identified an infinitely variable ability, the ‘getting on with students’, as intrinsic to

the interplay of teaching relationships. The management decision had been to leave the lecturer alone to create this interplay, as this was seen as fundamental to the flourishing of students and teachers alike. This degree of trust in the lecturers' ability to deliver could be seen as the actual fulfilment of the desire expressed by the manager in college C above, regarding good practice. She appeared to want this level of trust but didn't understand the tacit and 'goodwill' aspects of it.

Tick lists of mandatory criteria in lessons were considered largely irrelevant and even as destructive to practice, because they worked against discretion in the classroom. Although curricula changed and policy initiatives changed, learning according to this manager did not: *'I think there's a core that doesn't change very much, which is that students need to learn, whether that's through traditional or mixed or new forms of delivery. So in one sense it all changes, but it all stays the same.'* (OB HTT). The wisdom of the college senior management team created a college wide focus on the students and their engagement, which was achieved by trusting the lecturer, as a skilled professional, to use his/her discretion. To ignore spontaneity, or opportune digressions that occurred in a good learning situation, was actually regarded as poor teaching. Managers who observed lessons for annual staff reviews, required staff to take teaching to a higher plane than simply following a predetermined lesson plan, scripted sometime beforehand: *'Lesson observations is a good example of that. Sometimes a [DHTT] will say, "you've over prepared that lesson"'. (SDM)*. Discretionary behaviour in classroom interactions was therefore taken as an indicator of truly creative teaching, and as a sign of successful student engagement. Likewise, practice was not evaluated by end of year statistical data alone. Classroom realities and the unpredictability of the responses to practice were viewed as an integral part of the learning experience and were greatly encouraged, being viewed as part of the richness of the teaching relationship: *'Figures [on poor student retention and achievement] don't always tell the whole story. I think it's important to talk to people and listen to their view of what's happening in their classes, so as to take a proactive approach in supporting them'*. (OB HTT). This was antithetical to the 'one size fits all' approach taken in college A and aspired to in college C.

To protect teaching activities across the college and to enable the lecturer to get on with what he/she is employed to do, i.e. teach, managers tried, as far as possible, to remove irrelevancies from the lecturer's daily duties. One experienced lecturer appreciated that her

responsibility was towards students, but it wasn't down to her to spend inappropriate amounts of time sorting out their endless problems: *'You can refer them to student services, where there's a counsellor and people who have specialist knowledge. So, you're more a facilitator.'* (MT experienced). This demonstrated that the system was in place to avert damage to teaching practice by making excessive demands outside the classroom. Similarly, one novice saw her role as being limited primarily to academic issues. In her experience student problems concerned: *'[The] stress about their exam results or about their course work not being done'* (GF novice), and not intractable pastoral matters. By creating a space in which lecturers could focus on teaching, management gave unqualified support to the implementation of discretionary autonomy by the individual lecturer. It was not a coercive situation like in college A, because the college positively tried to give the practitioner the necessary wherewithal, in time and resources, to be able to perform his/her teaching role.

Discretionary autonomy as expressed in teaching was fostered to a great extent by the existence of subject based workrooms. The aspects of discretion developed in these workrooms, were not only understanding and insight regarding techniques, but also and perhaps more importantly, interaction with likeminded colleagues encouraged less confident and less experienced members of staff to try out new approaches in the classroom. Collegiality was generated primarily amongst lecturers, but also between lecturers and their first level line managers. They all interacted as partners engaged in the teaching process: *'If I want to look into something else or I want to go in a different direction, then I would approach my line manager.'* (MT experienced). It was in the workroom that ideas and novel approaches were sounded out and information passed on about teaching, with the most experienced tending to coach and encourage the less experienced practitioners: *'I sometimes get someone saying, "I'm not sure what to do about this" and asking for my advice. So, I don't feel there's a difficulty there. I've mentored quite a few of the staff. So, this tends towards a trust situation'*. (DD experienced).

### **6.3 The dimension of practice: responsibility**

In chapter 2.3 Carr's (2006) discussion of the purpose of teaching was presented. According to him, teaching for practitioners and students should be based on flourishing, i.e. the internalised moral orientations of the practitioner were, by and large, dedicated to

the enhancement and achievement of wellbeing for the student. Responsibility was placed on the practitioner to seek continuous self improvement to enrich his/her insight into the human condition. With this depth of wisdom, a practitioner could offer his/her learners what they needed for flourishing. This moral responsibility underpinned the practitioner-student relationship, where the student implicitly trusted in the integrity of the practitioner to guide him/her on their mutual learning journey. Carr's model of responsibility, purely regulated by practitioners' notions of integrity, in reality, has had limited application, because education is a public good and subject to political interference. It does, however, present an archetypal blueprint, if an extreme example, of the practitioner's responsibility towards students.

The calculative regime in incorporated colleges has led to redefinition of the purpose of schooling, and consequently of practitioner responsibility towards students. In chapter 3.4, therapeutic care, with lecturers employed as therapists, was posited as one novel departure concerning lecturer responsibility towards certain sections of the FE student population. The new responsibility of lecturers to 'shore up' students suffering from fragile self esteem through 'therapy', appeared to directly subvert the idea of teaching for flourishing. In essence, this new therapeutic approach acts as a form of anaesthetic to dull the pain and challenge of learning and hence, restricts flourishing in both staff and students. These 'lecturers / therapists' were criticised as being in ignorance of, or, alternatively, as shirking their pedagogic responsibility, but given that lecturers were faced with many pressures in the contemporary college setting, therapeutic teaching methodology was commonplace (Ecclestone, 2004; Hayes, 2005).

Moving on to discuss lecturers as the other half of this mutual journey, consideration of them as flourishing individuals has disappeared under hard versions of HRM, where macho mantras such as 'survival of the fittest' or 'if you can't stand the heat...' permeated college life (Kerfoot and Whitehead, 2000). Likewise, the instability of college operations, fluctuating staffing levels and corporate financial insecurity, have led to the creation of environments that are antagonistic towards 'communities of practice' (Gleeson et al., 2005). The calculative regime in which business pressures dominated, matched with the intensification and extensification of job roles, suggest that working relationships have become more strictly bound by contracts and limited to staff fulfilling terms of employment. These influences may have caused lecturers to move away from notions of

collegiate responsibilities towards their peers and may have undermined any sense of tacit responsibility, grounded in abstract principles such as integrity and moral obligation.

### **6.3.1 Responsibility in college B**

In college B, the experienced and novice lecturers saw their commitment as primarily towards the welfare of students in their tutor group and in the subject groups that they taught: *'I think care for the students is really important and a desire to see the students flourish'*. (DD experienced). *'I feel I'm doing something quite worthwhile and they're really good fun to be with'*. (GF novice). This college had a very good reputation and was renowned for its record of student achievements and therefore it was not surprising that members of staff expressed their commitment to their students.

In contrast, from the point of view of students and their parents, the responsibility of the tutor lay somewhere else and had taken a slightly different turn. Students were following a course to secure successful grades to advance their careers: *'a lot of students will take on XX to support other subjects or they will take on XX, because they're told that they need it or because it is seen to be a good academic course.'* (MT experienced). This was a departure from earlier times when this experienced lecturer saw students studying for the love of a subject and to grow through their learning: *'I don't know whether it's good for the student as an individual to just be doing subjects to achieve high grades. The one thing that I have noticed over the years is that students talk about subjects in terms of goals'*. (MT experienced). It is apparent that competition in the market for elite university entrance had a trickle down effect on the purpose of college learning, as understood by these groups of students. The redefining by students of their education as an investment in exam grades, i.e. as a product rather than as a process, was a challenge to this experienced member of staff.

Very good course grades, generated by strong teaching, were the goal shared by managers, students, their parents and the lecturers. The student led drive for successful grades conformed to the aims of management that students did well. However, a more cynical view of management reasoning behind this unity, was detected by one experienced lecturer: *'They [managers] talk about how important it is for the students to have success, but it's not about whether they care whether any individual student has success. They care about figures and our position in the league tables'*. The focus of management interest was

in reality, meeting targets: *'From the management point of view, it's all to do with, retention, giving the right answers to the LSC'*. This was considered sometimes to conflict with the tutor's judgement of what was best for an individual: *'for the individual students, if they're not getting on and it would be best for them to leave, we should encourage them to leave basically. Whereas that is never the management line, they are supposed to stay'*. (RM experienced). This conflict was between lecturers' work being either for the students' wellbeing or for generating better statistics for the college. However, the dilemma was understood by the lecturer not to be of the managers' making, but just symptomatic of the commercial nature of the FE sector: *'It isn't actually anything to do with our managers at all. They are just jumping through hoops, [that] have not been set by themselves. ... FE has been set up as a business'*. (RM experienced).

Likewise, another widely sensed 'commercial' responsibility placed on lecturers was generated by the competition between different colleges. Customer/student freedom of choice meant that staff members were under an obligation to treat students well, to prevent any of them from dropping out and enrolling with a competitor institution: *'they don't have to come to this college. So there is pressure on you to become nice to the students'*, however, getting on with students, by and large, did not seem to be a problem *'... but that's not difficult if you actually like them'* (RM experienced). Even if a lecturer did not think the student was best suited to a programme of study, it was the lecturer's responsibility to treat that individual well: *'I think from the teacher's point of view, you have to try and ignore all that [management issues of retention and achievement] as best you can, although it's quite difficult to, because we are actually here for the students'*. (RM experienced).

The prime responsibility of the lecturer was considered to be developing the student-lecturer relationship. The lecturer, as a professional practitioner, was expected to reflect and seek constant refinement of the way he/she worked with students: *'If you're not constantly reflecting on the way you do things, on your approach to things, on your work and looking at ways to improve it, I would think it's very strange'* (VP). The line managers and lecturers seemed to agree with this ethos: *'I think a few different people have said the day when you think you have done the perfect lesson, that's it, it's over'*. (GF novice). *'Staff are far more, far more self critical and are quite happy to say "I've just done a shit job"'*. (KK DHTT). This outlook may have reflected the responsibility of self motivation

and inner moral obligation to improve, as posited by Carr. However, the moral obligation of constant self improvement in this college may have been, in part, hijacked by the college management, for their own 'calculative' ends. The obligation of self improvement, nevertheless still contributed, to a large extent, to the practitioners' ends of seeking flourishing for students. It would appear, however, that experienced lecturers had reconciled themselves to the shift in power away from the practitioners towards students/clients and external agendas of commercialism, under the calculative regime prevailing in the sector

In college B, management recognised its responsibility for supporting this lecturer/student primary relationship and implemented appropriate structures to provide a strong support network. All teaching staff, whether part-time or full-time were obliged to participate in this framework, without exception. The entire staff, managers and lecturers alike, worked long hours and gave many hours per week of their own 'free time' to the college. However, unlike other colleges, lecturers had neither set attendance hours nor teaching days through the academic year. In effect, they were not made to work to the full letter of the contract, rather, to its spirit. There existed an unwritten 'two way understanding' pictured by one HTT as lecturers and senior managers being locked together: *'if you put out for mama, then mama will put out for you.'* (OB HTT). As long as the member of staff was agreeing to the rules of engagement, he/she was protected and respected. If a lecturer was seen as non-collegiate in going outside the terms of what was acceptable, they broke the mutual bond: *'but if the same person always had an excuse ... we would bear it in mind when they need a favour or some flexibility or maybe seek a promotion or a responsibility'*. (OB HTT). Thus, a lecturer could find him/herself an outcast, if he/she violated the organisation's psychological contract: *'[if you] are out of favour for one reason or another, then the appraisal can often be used in quite a threatening way.'* (RM experienced).

### **6.3.2 Responsibility in college A**

The managers and lecturing staff in college A both stated that the responsibility of the lecturer was to the students. Statements about putting the needs of the student first were commonplace: *'concerned for their individual success and achievement and well being and happiness during their time at college'* (BS experienced), *'we're trying to enhance people's life chances'* (QA Manager), *'doing the best for their students and making sure their students progress'* (VP). These statements of agreement were as far it went, in terms

of common purpose. What the responsibility of the lecturer meant, in reality, varied significantly between lecturers and managers.

One manager interpreted meeting the needs of the students as meeting the targets set for each taught course. Where these statistics for a course did not meet the performance indicator/target percentage, the needs of students were considered to have not been met. Consequently, remedial action had to be taken by the line manager to correct deficient teaching and, if the lecturers could not be ‘transported up’, then they should be ousted from their jobs: *‘where we look at the people [lecturers] who aren’t effective and try to transport them up to the same benchmark, or, we remove them from the organisation.’* (SDM). Although there could be no disagreement that bad teachers should be encouraged and supported in moving to a different career, the emphasis of the management team, given the frequency of the responses from them, appeared to be ‘shape up or ship out’. This one sided approach to what was deemed ‘good practice’ had the potential of seriously undermining academic debate, because genuine dialogue could easily be written off as ‘troublemaking’. As a consequence, pluralism of pedagogical debate was in danger of being subverted to being a negative concept with management justification. As the HR manager put it: *‘colleges [have had] to strip out some of those they needed to strip out’*, with the implication that constructive dialogue could be wrongly interpreted as dissent leading to ‘poor practice’.

Managers were not only unsupportive, but were even actively obstructive according to some lecturers, in that they hindered flourishing on the part of both students and staff. One novice struggled to understand what was achieved for students by shepherding them from one course to the next, with little personal development to show for it: *‘I was quite appalled, they [students] had entered the college at level 1, had no direction, they were then ushered to level 2, with no direction and now they’re at level 3 with no direction. I mean it can’t be a bad thing that they are at college. But the politics of just keeping students, getting the numbers in, I don’t think is a true reflection of the educational needs of society’* (GB novice). One experienced lecturer illustrated this process regarding learner progression in the ‘traffic lights tool’ vignette in the last chapter. She argued that student plagiarism was widespread throughout the college and tacitly condoned, thereby creating the situation of unchallenged student progression. Moreover, she posited that many



lecturers colluded in such practice, in order to have a quiet life and to bolster their instinct for self preservation by not questioning the status quo.

One novice did not see any ethical problem with regard to his students always passing. The focus of his attention was his personal tutees' pass rates, which positively correlated with his approval rating in his personal annual review: *'I got excellent marks and that was about it really. It was over in about 2 minutes.'* (HM novice). When he saw himself as doing well, he meant he was reaching the performance targets, without questioning their ethical validity. It could be that this lecturer, new to the job, tended towards the self oriented strategies and self preservation that the experienced lecturer observed in her novice colleagues: *'They don't volunteer for work. [They] spend a lot of time hiding and know how to play the game. They just do what they need to do and then they stop.'* (WH experienced). Having the managers set the benchmark targets for courses was potentially useful, as it clearly indicated for a practitioner, such as this novice, what 'good at the job' meant in the eyes of significant others i.e. his managers. However, several managers claimed that they did not want lecturers to interpret their responsibilities in this self regarding way: *'My concern is if you have a minimum level you're pulling people up to it whilst also pulling people down...'* (HRM). Thus it would appear that the approach of management perversely encouraged some novices to adopt such strategies, which will always be one downside of calculative regimes promoting numerical targets. Even management acknowledged that benchmarking levels of success restricted the quality and quantity of effort they desired from lecturers: *'[In] a target driven environment, people will do as much as they have to, to make the target'*. (QA Manager). That is to say, actions are target driven and this detracts from creative flourishing and trying out new approaches in the classroom with the learners.

In chapter 3 it was explained how since incorporation in 1992 in the FE sector there has been a move towards a marketisation. This has meant the students, regarded as clients/customers, have been able to choose more actively where they undertook their studies. That is to say, if the provision was poor, or inappropriate, they could go elsewhere. However, in this college the majority of students had few immediate career prospects and were not going to be snapped up by other school 6<sup>th</sup> forms or colleges in the local area. Even though the market approach didn't function properly regarding this college, students were still viewed as clients/customers and lecturers were expected to treat them

accordingly. The students, as customers, had been given substantial extra rights, which meant they demanded extensive extra support. The huge burden of dealing with the high levels of educational disadvantage in this college had been placed on the lecturing body. Previously in this college, students that were considered too much of ‘a handful’ had been asked to leave. However, retention requirements linked to funding had led to this practice being curtailed.

As seen in the ‘traffic lights’ vignette, one particular experienced lecturer wanted to be a good teacher and as a consequence gave a considerable amount of her non-contact time to her students. However, when comparing contemporary students, with those she used to teach, she found those on her course and more generally across the college, were weaker than previously: *‘Instead of having the cream, we now have what’s left over’*. Whilst some of her colleagues took no interest in students’ pastoral concerns, she prided herself in her sensitive approach to this issue. However, as she stated: *‘We used to have the majority could cope, now, instead of 18[students] OK and 2 with problems, we’re now 2 OK and 18 with problems’*. which starkly demonstrated the shift in the nature of the student body. She argued that she was being forced into a non-pedagogic role by the sheer weight of numbers of the students with social and emotional problems on her course: *‘The balance has gone too far in the other direction’*. (WH experienced). She was left sensing that she was becoming more of a social worker or therapist and no longer working as a teacher, in the traditional sense: *‘you are the substitute parent dealing with the issues, probably always fighting against the underpinning causes, as to why they are behaving in such a way’*. (WH experienced).

Another experienced lecturer regretted that some of his students had a poor attitude: *‘some students see this just as somewhere to go when it’s wet’* and contrasted this to earlier times when the college *‘was an adult environment’* (EE experienced). Given the prevailing negative attitude amongst students, he contrasted their approach to him with the way he was required to treat them: *‘Whereas 10 years ago I’d of just exploded and said, “What the blinking Henry are you just sitting there doing nothing for? Get on with it”. Nowadays I have to go up to them and I have to say “Now do you really think you’re getting the most out of this lesson?”’*. His interaction with students was controlled by the fear of student complaints and the subsequent potentially negative outcomes by his being reported to management: *‘I was once misunderstood by a student and as a result of that...the student*

*took things, through formal channels and then the management system had to kick in and they came back to me and they started asking me my side of things.*’ (EE experienced). The insecurity in the lecturer’s interactions in the classroom, caused through the low levels of trust, undermined the status of the practitioner as a responsible professional, who could be left alone to create a flourishing learning environment. Clearly, the lecturer’s own opportunities for flourishing had been tainted by anxiety and a constant sense of being watched by certain students. The shift in the power relationship in the classroom in favour of the student, had led to the situation where students had become the arbiters and if the member of staff was unpopular, they could make his/her life difficult.

The high levels of emotional labour that were expected from staff in their work with students were not matched by any such undertaking by managers, in their relationships with lecturers. There was no evidence of managers accepting the responsibility for being sensitive towards teaching staff and they did not participate in helping staff develop useful lecturer-student relationships. One Vice Principal said: *‘I want them [i.e. lecturers] to feel special as teachers here and I want to make it very clear to them that they’re the stars of the organisation, really.’* (VP). However, this point of view was challenged by one newly arrived novice: *‘the students are recognised as sensitive human beings and we as the lecturers have to realise that part of the teaching role is to nurture individuals in a non-educational way, as well as an educational way. But the lecturing staff don’t seem to be recognised as having the same needs and weaknesses.’* (GB novice). It was a shock to the novice that managers expected emotional labour from staff, but failed to reciprocate in kind. The message about the ‘worth’ of the lecturer to the organisation was summarised neatly by this novice: *‘at the moment HR are offering £10 per person for 25 years service, for a gift, £10 is just.....25 years service is £10!’* (GB novice).

Responsibility of lecturers towards students was put under severe pressure in college A. The orientation of responsibility appeared to becoming split, based on length of service. Novice lecturers’ narratives suggested that a reluctance to seek out additional responsibilities was emerging. Their longer serving, more experienced colleagues were struggling against the odds to fulfil what they saw as implicit responsibilities in their practice, regarding their engagement with students and with their colleagues.

### **6.3.3 Responsibility in college C**

The lecturers and managers in college C stated that their responsibilities lay with meeting the needs of students. The extent to which these responsibilities could be met appeared to be determined by the prevailing management system. The capacity of managers to enforce their world view appeared to be weak and thus across departments, lecturers were often left to their own devices. When management appears ineffectual i.e. the 'economies of performance' are weak, it would suggest that practitioners would welcome this opportunity to teach according to their 'ecologies of practice', i.e. fulfil their responsibilities to seek student flourishing. However, the absence of management emerged as more complex in its impact on lecturers' abilities to meet their responsibilities.

One example of the impact of the lack of management was one experienced lecturer, who found himself utterly unable to fulfil the burden of responsibilities that he felt he had and was on the point of a breakdown, (which occurred shortly afterwards): *'I've got all these people relying on me. Not people I work with, people who are [students].. And I've got all these pills to take now. I don't like that, I don't like that at all. But it's through this, that's done it'*. (TC experienced). He was struggling to deliver what he considered reasonable lessons and meet the learning needs of his students, because of the disorganisation in his department. This disorganisation was causing him great distress because he felt he was letting down his students, which in his view was unprofessional. He was however morally unable to bring himself to adopt the unethical solutions he observed amongst his colleagues, namely selling the students short: *'I've said this, probably all through my working life, that I wish to God, that I didn't have a conscience. I wish that I could be like... Other people that I know, who don't give a damn about anything'*. (TC experienced).

He had thought the situation could be improved by asking managers to organise the scheduling more efficiently and to dedicate more funding to his short courses. However, when approached about these issues his managers dismissed his concerns out of hand, which left him feeling even more confused and distressed. This narrative showed a good example of how the lack of an effective management operation, left the novice unable to function effectively as a lecturer, because he was wracked with guilt at not delivering teaching that was good enough for his students. The substructure of the organisation had to be provided by managers, before the staff could take classes and teach students: *'I said just like some information about the room. So she said "yes, yes, we've got a nice room." And I said "um, flip chart?" "No, no, don't have a flip chart!" "Um, television, video?" "No,*

*don't have television or video.*" And, jokingly, I said, "well of course you have got chairs, haven't you?" "Oh no, we haven't got any chairs." "And I said, you haven't got any chairs?" And then jokingly again, I said "of course tables?" "Oh no, we haven't got any tables." (TC experienced). So, therefore, it became apparent that through lack of experience and faced with an unstructured and unsupported environment, this lecturer failed to cope with the pressures and fulfil his responsibilities effectively.

In complete contrast to the scenario of the failing lecturer, another experienced lecturer was blossoming in a situation where senior management was failing to control his teaching department. The lecturer actively enjoyed the immunity and independence his team seemed to have from the college system: *'In terms of relationships with those higher up the scale, relatively little involvement. Day to day, operationally, they have zero impact on what I do and how I do it.'* (BU experienced). Because of his extensive background built on years in teaching, he was able to focus on engaging with his students, in what he considered a mutually beneficial way and hence he met his responsibilities towards students with ease. He enjoyed the nurturing that came from participating in a community of practitioners, who shared his outlook towards the students. A supportive network of personal and professional relationships had been created through many years of shared work experiences, to such an extent that the members of this informal group were able to support each other in facing new challenges, such as the top – down imposition of some new bureaucratic system on their department: *'one is forced to adhere to some procedure.....[and I think] well, it would be nice if these people had a bit more informed knowledge about the reality of the job.'* (BU experienced). Therefore, it may be surmised that this experienced lecturer, in the absence of strong leadership, was sufficiently equipped in terms of experience and skills to flourish in his practice.

A third type of response to the college's weak management emerged in one department as an unofficial contest. The recent promotion to Head of Team of one of the staff resulted in a space opening up in the department. A contest developed over who was going to occupy this 'political' space and assume the dominant position in the team. The tensions of this contest will be described more fully in the section on knowledge, but part of the contest was over whose orientations and interpretation of responsibility would dominate the teaching team. The resultant vacuum that surrounded this key 'political' space was not dealt with by the college SMT and the Head of Team seemed to be leaving her staff to sort

themselves out. She had retreated to the safe space of her private office until some staff had complained about her disappearing act: *'She can hide away. She hadn't been aware of that, but she does do that and in the past we have had weeks without seeing her.'* (SE experienced). The issue of responsibility was left up in the air and remained unresolved amongst this team.

The issue of responsibility in college C was determined by the overriding contextual problem of there being no effective management in parts of the college and this may have been largely owing to the size of the organisation. As discussed above in the section on autonomy, college C managers had limited control and appeared ineffectual in enforcing mandatory systematic ways of working. The result of this for lecturers' responsibility was that there was a vacuum regarding orientations. In this vacuum, staff could be tied up in intra departmental power struggles, as seen in the last example above. Alternatively, they could be left in a state of collapse, because they didn't have the experience to deliver on their responsibilities. However, in some of the more well established and stable departments, the lecturers enjoyed the absence of interference by senior management. Here they may have realised mutual flourishing through engaging purposefully with students and colleagues. As it can be seen, responsibility in situations where there is a vacuum due to weak management takes on different forms. It depends on the quality, ability and wherewithal of lecturers as to how they respond. Some lecturers when given free rein will thrive, others will not.

#### **6.4 The practice dimension: knowledge**

Knowledge for FE lecturers has been posited in some literature, as having been reduced to little more than explicit technical skills and competencies (Hyland, 1997, Tarrant, 2000). Accordingly, explicit skills can be effectively scrutinised and monitored by managers against pre-set benchmarks and performance indicators, as they have been hollowed out and stripped of value judgements, morals and orientations. Green (2004) posited that the reason for removing the value laden tacit dimensions from practitioners' knowledge was to facilitate managers' quest to be in control. This degraded form of practice is considered as lacking the richness of the inside-out qualities that practitioners previously brought to bear in their work with their students and colleagues, and thus the organisation may lose some essence of professionalism. This simplification of the teaching process does, however, make it much easier for managers to practise. As presented in chapter 3.3, the calculative

regime when applied to lecturers' knowledge culminates in practitioners being employed as 'learning professionals'.

In this section, the nature of the training provided to lecturers is examined. The degree of importance attached to the tacit and explicit dimensions of practitioner knowledge are considered, in order to gauge how each college management viewed the practitioner. At one extreme, lecturers could have been considered as conduits for disseminating prescribed tasks, whereas at the other, they could have been recognised as creative sentient beings with the power to make judgements.

The discussion of knowledge is important in the context of practice, because it draws the elements of professionalism together. Autonomy can only be expressed if the practitioner has a knowledge base from which to exert judgement. Responsibility is only be exercised with humility, if the practitioner has a well developed awareness of what Carr (2006) sees as the moral orientations of the professional practitioner. In other words, the knowledge of the practitioner underpins the nature and extent of the inside-out 'ecologies of practice' that the practitioner brings to his/her workplace. The complex challenge of reconciling the external 'economies of performance' faced in the immediate environment is handled more effectively by the practitioner, if he/she has a rich base of both tacit and explicit knowledge with which to negotiate.

#### **6.4.1 Knowledge in college A**

The discussion of practitioner knowledge examined the initial teacher training (ITT) programme for novices, as this usually formed the first point of contact with training and development that they encountered when they joined the college. The content of the in-house ITT in college A was unsatisfactory according to all the novices interviewed. One commented on the very narrow course content, which focussed mostly on administration: *'I do find 80% of it an utter waste of time. They teach you how to fill out paperwork, which is useful, lesson plans and SOW, but that's pretty much all I've got from it.'* (HM novice). Apart from that, it was seen as condescending by some staff: *'They'll teach you, you've got be careful when you're dealing with pens, because it can be embarrassing if you get an ink splodge on your shirt. I thought, what am I doing here - learning how to keep the pen lid on?'* (HM novice). Another quit ITT because the course instructors were behaving in an unacceptable way towards participants: *'I started my PGCE here and it was just so*

*completely wrong the way that the lecturers were dictating to us. Telling us one thing, but behaving in a completely different fashion. The regime here is blind to this, so I just walked away from that straight away*' (GB novice). In contrast to the experiences of the novices, managers stated that the ITT was very satisfactory, for example: *'the feedback has been very positive and they really appreciate the opportunity to have the training and to have it paid for.'* (HRM). Evidently, there was an inconsistency here. This situation left the novices still searching for answers to their pressing pedagogical issues, because the ITT had been inadequate: *'I was waiting for this golden lesson where I was going to be shown [how to deal with difficult groups] .....the holy grail! This is going to make my life easier and... it was a complete waste of time. ....she [the tutor] didn't have a clue.'* (HM novice).

The opportunity of ITT as a training ground to prepare the novices, by learning and then having opportunities to try out methodologies from their pedagogical understanding, was missing in college A. The novice concluded: *'Quite frankly I haven't learnt anything that I haven't picked up myself in the classroom'* (HM novice). For this college, this implied that the quality of teaching was of an unpredictable nature; it could be good, it could be bad, depending on the calibre of the novice, but what was evident was that the college had very little input into the outcome. In essence it rested on nothing more than improvisation by the lecturer: *'I can kind of bluff, pretend that I know what I'm doing even if I don't.'* (HM novice). The knowledge base of the novice lecturer consisted of thinking on his feet and using ad hoc coping strategies to get through the day. Another novice was seen to rely on his commonsense for the most part, to deal with students, particularly those with very poor motivation and basic levels of skills: *'I think that in terms of common sense and goodwill,[I have] enough for me to work on for me to be an effective teacher'.* (GB novice).

The professional development (CPD) for the staff body, as a whole, was based around the staff development days put on by the QA Manager and the Staff Development Manager. Staff attendance at the training sessions was mandatory, because these days formed part of the recently agreed staff calendar. The training items on the CPD schedule were decided upon by the Heads of Teams and the Staff Development Manager. Topics for consideration were chosen by them, in accordance with their views of what was appropriate for the business of the college and what complied with national demands. For example, the training schedule included demands instigated by the DIUS or Ofsted, such as legislative



developments in areas of Equality and Diversity and Every Child Matters. As the QA Manager described it: *'spending the big bucks needs to be in terms of what's supporting where the college needs to get to.'* Making the staff attend these CPD days did not necessarily mean that sufficient progress had been made in developing staff skills, which was conceded by one Vice Principal regarding compulsory VLE training: *'One example would be the use of ILT in learning. That's been a big movement in this college. We've forced everybody to attend SD on that and there's been different sorts of success.'* (VP). The process of monitoring the effectiveness of compulsory CPD days, took the form of line managers making annual lesson observations and appraisals to find out whether methodologies/skills from training days were being employed. In other words, the process was of a fairly 'light touch' nature and not really able to judge if the training had been economically effective. The only skills development outside of these formal CPD staff development days was the 'Learning Squares' project, where a loose collection of staff had, on occasion, met to discuss practice. However, this had not been supported through any remission from teaching and thus lecturers found it very difficult to participate on a regular basis. After the chief protagonist for the project left the college, the initiative failed.

Encouraging the tacit dimension of lecturer knowledge was under developed on this college site. The Vice Principal stated what he wanted to achieve regarding informal learning: *'What I'd like to see...on any one day there's thousands of conversations going on about teaching.'* but admitted that the prevailing atmosphere was that: *'There's a culture here that if you're sat reading, you're kind of skiving, which is bizarre.'* He agreed that tacit dimensions required some form of proactive intervention and that the physical structure and organisation of staff workrooms was one area that he was actively engaged in changing. He was of the opinion that staff sharing space created a better chance for an exchange of information and thus criticised the present rooming arrangements, which left staff segregated in 'little subject silos'. However, the recent actions of managers, presumably acting under his guidance, who insensitively broke up well established workrooms, was fiercely criticised by one experienced lecturer, who saw this as hugely detrimental: *'she [HTT] kicked everybody out of the staffroom and we found ourselves with colleagues, that we couldn't exchange views [with]. [The SMT think] "if you're just with people you work with, you've already done that [i.e. exchange views]", haven't you?'* (WH experienced). Thus, for the experienced member of staff, management had carelessly destroyed a very valuable emotional and social support network. The rich 'bank' of

experience that had resided in the cohesive relations of the original workroom had been shattered and managers apparently had done nothing in the new workroom to generate a new network to replace the previous one. The workplace atmosphere that resulted was *'less friendly, almost, less relaxed. There's not the opportunity to network in the same way'* (BS experienced). Therefore in reality, it would appear that management's action had had the opposite effect to that desired. Moreover, the lack of consultation with the teaching staff meant that lecturers were left feeling that their views were not important.

The current management style was described as one of constantly tightening their control over teaching matters, through the device of formal 'initiatives' and thus sidelining lecturers' input: *'Things that were dealt with through staff discussing and coming to a best solution on issues like differentiation, becomes now an initiative, rather than something that was dealt with organically through the course teams'*. (BS experienced). Where staff chatting together to sort out classroom issues had once been the natural approach amongst lecturers, currently, the managers dictated solutions and issued instructions to support these. Email was cited as a good example of this instruction culture: *'You could have 20 emails flying left right and centre'* (WH experienced), *'There doesn't seem to be much true communication now. There's a lot of emails flying around and a lot of instructions'* (BS experienced).

The idea of a lecturer as a thinking, sentient practitioner appeared to be an anathema. As one novice said: *'I'm not certain how much longer I can continue being treated like an idiot, I don't know... [maybe I want] to find an environment that may be more conducive to me and what I want to teach'* (GB novice). This novice's situation corresponded with the way managers talked about and handled lecturers. For example, as shown above, one manager clearly preferred staff members who filled out the 'traffic lights tool' tick boxes without thinking: *'you don't have to think'* (SDM), and thought it was for managers to solve problems, decide 'good practice' etc. However, this was in contrast to the view of one Vice Principal: *'I think new young teachers bring in lots of new energy, but my argument would be, to become a truly outstanding teacher, you need quite a lot of experience'* (VP), which demonstrated that there was no consensus amongst the management team as to what the lecturer's role should be.

As discussed in chapter 2, Carr (2006) saw the purpose of teaching as flourishing and this was also referred to in the previous section on responsibility. Knowledge, according to Carr, was tied into the notion of flourishing, because the technical craft skills that practitioners possessed could not be untied from the value laden end product of their practice. Management in this college may have unwittingly succeeded in unhooking practitioners' craft skills from tacit aspects of practice, in spite of some of their membership's expressed goal not to do so. This situation runs the risk of taking the question of 'what is education for?' out of the picture, and ignoring the insights and wittingness of the practitioners. The latter were only allowed to discuss education within the parameters set out by management.

The QA Manager stated that the college's core value was '*[someone] who didn't think they had a chance in life, can actually do so much better than they ever imagined they could.*' It is beyond the bounds of this thesis to establish whether flourishing occurs at the student level. However, when considering this core value for staff, in practice the evidence suggested that management prioritised student flourishing over that of its workforce and the quality of the lecturers' experience appeared to have little improved.

#### **6.4.2 Knowledge in college C**

To discuss formal knowledge in college C the issue of ITT is addressed first. In college C, the novices interviewed found their teacher training courses hard to attend, whether a long certificate course or an initial 10 hour taster course, because some Heads of Teams were unwilling to grant them time away from classes for training: '*It's very varied, some departments do it [support ITT] very well and some don't*' (SDM). Attendance was difficult owing to practical everyday obstacles, such as cover for classes being unavailable, and because writing ITT coursework demanded a great deal of time from participants. For some novices, the ITT course formed only a small and possibly insignificant part of their overwhelming introduction to teaching: '*I think, in teaching as much as any area of the world, you [can] get very minimal orientation*' (IB novice).

As a reaction to the rather muddled and brutal introduction to the classroom teaching, one novice relied on her previous career working on a one to one basis in the care field, to formulate her teaching approach. She brought her caring ethos to her dealings with students: '*They are human beings, some of them less attractive than others, they do need*

us, [we are] sort of somewhere in-between friend and parent' (IB novice). But when her lessons regularly dissolved into chaos, her belief that the students needed her and the relationship she had built around this belief were shaken: *'They behaved like a bunch of gibbons; they were absolutely horrendous. At the end of it I said thank you very much, I think you've covered all the points there of bad behaviour during a lesson.'* (IB novice). A more sustainable outlook could possibly come from the novice undertaking her work with a view to flourishing, rather than indulging in satisfying student neediness, and her reciprocal neediness to be useful and liked. The concept of mutual flourishing may be a missing element of her teacher training.

Managers expressed limited confidence in the teacher training that their college provided. From one perspective, one manager believed that the ability to teach was something that was not teachable: *'I do think there's something intrinsic in being a teacher. It may take me four or five minutes to know whether you've got one of these lecturers in front of you, it takes the kids about two seconds.'* (VP). From his position, the charismatic essence of good teaching, namely the tacit dimension, could not be produced from an ITT programme: *'For good teachers and lecturers there's only one way to do it. There's no amount of procedures that are going to change the essence of their address. Nothing that comes down from government, in terms of skills, changes that'* (VP). This manager identified a very important failing in a lot of current ITT, in that many of the protagonists involved in its delivery, from the government downwards, take the view that teaching teachers can be reduced to a skills audit. This totally fails to address the tacit elements of practice, as set out in chapter 2.

However, another manager took almost the opposite view and argued that ITT should be made up of skills sets, which could be applied to each and every teaching situation. In her view, the ITT should be stripped of the more challenging academic elements, in order to make it more widely accessible to lesser educated members of staff. As she put it: *'A lot of it is about the theory of education. One example is the gentleman, [who was] a plumber and was an excellent tutor at plumbing, but did not enjoy his initial teacher training at all'*. (SDM). It appeared that many recruits to this college struggled with the complexities of academic knowledge, whether it was writing, reading or dealing with the ethical dilemmas and moral issues associated with pedagogy and the proposed solution was to lessen the academic rigour of the course, to avoid the exclusion of weaker members of staff. This is a

major change to FE teacher training, when compared to training for craft lecturers prior to incorporation. It calls into question the ability of current participants of such ITT programmes to acquire the abilities to understand the moral and ethical issues of pedagogy: *'we have some people who are not professionals'* (HR AM). Another manager put forward her goal that through ITT lecturers would become as follows: *'A professional lecturer should turn up on time, be well prepared, love their subject, care about their students, mark work in a timely manner, and enable their student to achieve'*. (SDM).

As discussed in the vignette on training in this college, CPD for this institution was a very mixed affair. Only recently had some college CPD been made compulsory for staff on issues that were legal requirements e.g. Every Child Matters. The obligation was put on the college to inform and train all the staff by the local LSC. Over and above these mandatory training sessions, other staff development opportunities that addressed explicit skills and capabilities, were dependent on lecturers' immediate team circumstances. Different training happened in ad hoc, informal formats across the college, sometimes without even the awareness or participation of the Staff Development Team, Human Resources Department or the campus Vice Principals. Several examples were found of small groups of staff working on organic projects that gave them a chance to gain knowledge in their subject area or to develop practice methodologies by sharing approaches. One example was given by a line manager who shared what he thought was a good idea for explaining a complex point to students, with his immediate group of staff: *'[he] came up with a quite original way of doing it, [so] we ran an informal class where we were the students and he was the teacher'*. (OR DHTT). Another experienced lecturer discussed how he and a few others had worked closely with an external professional accreditation board to develop a new lecture programme: *'Myself and a colleague did some work on trying to identify good practice for assessments and that was a very useful activity, because it made you think, .....and also one could learn from one's colleagues, which is great. [It was] a collaborative initiative amongst a few of us.'* (BU experienced). Thus it can be seen that staff development initiatives often did not come from the central management teams.

This somewhat erratic staff development approach was dependent on events and circumstances that occurred for a team. For the lecturers involved, they had the opportunity to advance their tacit and explicit understanding of aspects of their work practices. However, some lecturers worked for many months without developmental opportunities,

particularly when the team was not proactive or forward looking. To address the lack of professional development in the organisation, the SMT had decided to expand the training budget for the following year: *'staff development is 0.3% of turn over at the moment. So, [SMT] is trebling that next year.'* (SDM). A large proportion of the new budget had already been allocated by the SMT to improving the leadership of the deputies and heads of teams. The senior managers recognised that often middle managers were recruited from the ranks of lecturers and lacked management skills, which ultimately led to inconsistent leadership at the team level: *'So we take great teachers and we make them managers. Sometimes by lucky accident a teacher is a great manager, but not always.'* (SDM). Given the concurrent development of the Centre for Excellence in Leadership at the national level, this targeted CPD drive would appear to be the college taking up yet another initiative currently fashionable across the sector.

The tacit dimension of practitioner knowledge was not well addressed in the organisation. The ITT certificate introduced the concept of reflection to the course participants, but for practitioners outside of this formal programme, reflection on work to develop the tacit dimension of knowledge was problematic. When asked about reflective practice, one experienced lecturer commented on his personal thoughts: *'I know the value of reflection, but if it's been a really bad week, I don't want to spend the weekend reflecting on what a bloody awful week it's been'*. (HN experienced). Likewise, the idea of reflecting involved personal trauma for another: *'I am, I am fed up, sick to death of not being able to sleep at night. Of having a notebook by my bed, with a pencil, so that I wake up in the early hours of the morning....oh!, god I must remember that.'* (TC experienced). What would appear to be happening here was that reflection had become equated to suffering and anxiety. Moreover, it was interesting that the first thoughts that came into respondents' heads took this negative form and thus it became apparent that reflection had perversely become self damaging and threatening to personal wellbeing. The logical extension of this was that practitioners tended to avoid reflection, which is an essential part of an effective teacher, as a self protection strategy.

It did not seem to be possible for problems to be shared and hence resolved in some of the staff workrooms. This was in contrast to college B, where the staff workrooms emerged as safe arenas, in which novices and experienced colleagues alike, could spend time resolving difficult classroom incidents and seeking support. The function of the staff workrooms, as

places to exchange experiences and enhance tacit understanding appeared to fall into one of two extremes. Either the workroom members enjoyed constructive informal learning on casually formed, ad hoc projects which could be vulnerable to changes in staffing and departmental circumstances. Alternatively, the workrooms were scenes of conflict. Barely concealed animosity between colleagues and their line managers undoubtedly impacted negatively on the enhancement of tacit understanding.

One workroom provided an example of such infighting and mistrust. Here, the Head of Team was found to be dealing with very antagonistic relationships amongst her staff. One experienced lecturer had recently complained about her management style: *'I did actually complain to my line manager [because] ..... I did expect to be consulted'* (SE experienced). At the same time, this team manager had to deal with staff conflict where a novice had ruffled feathers over a particularly difficult group of students: *'XX and I had a clash a while back and that was totally my fault. XX took offence to what I said, I was really quite upset.....by the fact that she thought I would have that mind set. That was more...gosh that's not where I'm coming from at all'* (IB novice). Although this one incident had been dealt with, this novice was still regarded as a liability: *'another person was brought in to co-teach with me, that's not been successful. Although she does do it [i.e. take lessons], she's so inexperienced that actually..I would never tell her... quite frankly it would be better if I was tutor still'*. (SE experienced).

To develop the novice's competency and confidence, the manager had had to resort to hands on guidance to show her how to manage classes: *'ZZZ's been lovely, because she's been coming in the last couple of Mondays and pair teaching with this stroppy group'*. (IB novice). This novice was fortunate in some respects, because in many other teams, the manager would have left the novice to sink or swim by herself: *'[some] departments it will be "off you go and teach."'* (SDM). This workroom and its group of staff evidently were struggling to create a trusting environment, which was a necessity if tacit understanding was to be acquired. Until the underpinning issues were resolved by management in giving some direction or purpose to the group, the team ethos would inevitably continue to stagnate.

As was consistent with earlier discussions, this college showed a mixed picture of management action and inaction over the matter of training. College wide mandatory

training was not successfully enforced and as seen in the vignette in chapter 5, some staff continued to view training as fairly irrelevant to them. Knowledge was developed by certain lecturers in their teams, by encouraging others to collaborate on small team based projects or issues. This often went on without any input from the managers, who were officially 'in charge' of the formal skills development agenda. Tacit dimensions of knowledge were largely by-passed by the management methods adopted in this organisation. It was a matter of luck as to whether the workroom provided staff with a positive environment, in which to share experiences and learn from each other. In reality, the workrooms could be places of conflict and division. Unlike in college A, the question of who controlled the knowledge agenda was still unresolved and as a consequence, individual power and experience determined who were the front runners for dominance of the agenda in college C. Lecturers tended to dissipate their extensive talents in following up their own small projects and interests, regardless of whether or not these projects contributed to the college's overall performance. This led to a rather wasteful use of the knowledge pool, which is inherent to all individuals and should be exploited systematically by the corporation, as will be shown in college B.

#### **6.4.3 Knowledge in college B**

The last college to discuss is college B. Here, one novice stated that ITT had its limitations for her, because although she had completed it successfully, she felt she still had to develop her own methodology: *'I think during my PGCE it was quite funny, I thought you had to do it this way. It took me a few months to forget what they told me on the PGCE and go back to what I wanted to do before that'*. (GF novice). For her the process was about increasing her confidence in figuring out and trusting in her own practice methodology, in order to be able to deliver a good teaching standard. For this novice, good teaching was: *'making sure I have covered the stuff and making sure that they are benefiting from the lesson and they are happy.'* (GF novice). This seemed to suggest that she was orientated towards making room for flourishing to take place during her practice.

In college B, ITT emerged as part of the integrated process of the college developing its own members of staff. It was not the only element of training that the novice received, because the college recognised the need to constantly nurture her, in her job roles. A great deal of time and effort was put into developing her abilities through formally organised induction and mentoring systems, so that she developed practice methodologies that fitted



in with the college environment: *'all new staff get observed as well, and have the opportunity to observe other people. So, my teaching, I guess, is checked'*. (GF novice). In the reviews with her mentors and managers, technical issues covered only part of the concerns they had regarding her development. The social context of the staff team for her learning and her development of tacit understanding were part of the review process and her feedback was sought with interest: *'it's all things like.. there's a lot of ....do you say thank you to your colleagues? Do you work well in a team? A lot of quite personal questions'*. (GF novice). The most significant concern to the management appeared to be that the staff were getting on well with her and looking after her: *'that [staff] are nice to each other when they're not teaching.... it's quite sensible they've got that on there [i.e. her review]'*. (GF novice). Hence, as the senior managers recognised that 'lecturer's presence' was a significant part of teaching, they went to considerable lengths to instil this tacit dimension in the novice's repertoire. It was surmised that ITT certification on this college site was viewed very much as a short precursor to the lengthy and in depth fostering of a potential teacher, who in the long run, was a positive asset to the organisation. Clearly, this was holistically viewed as an investment strategy in terms of the individual lecturer.

It was evident that this novice received informal coaching and was inducted into practice methodology by those around her. She and her more experienced colleagues shared a workroom, the DHTT answered her questions and showed her how to deal with difficult students, and, she was included in the many extra curricular activities that her department put on for students to aid their coursework building *'we do talk about the students quite a lot, because we share classes. So if there is a problem, the first thing we do is speak to the other person'*. (GF novice).

In this college managers aimed to capitalise on informal learning opportunities for all staff, novices and experienced alike. To this end, the correct rooming of staff was of key importance, so that they had maximum contact. Workrooms were organised with the purpose of allowing staff to communicate. As stated by one line manager, situations where staff couldn't communicate were carefully avoided: *'We were aware that a maths lecturer at one end [of the campus] and one at the other end didn't have the opportunity for those very important and valuable 5 minute chats in the corridor, or during coffee breaks. [In and around the workroom is] where a great deal of experience and valuable info is*

*exchanged and so we reorganised it [staff workroom] this September along subject lines'. (KK DHTT). These 'five minute' chats were recognised as invaluable to keeping on top of student issues and departmental matters. Close knit workrooms were considered the place for the exchange of tacit understanding, pedagogical insight and techniques to try out in the classroom: 'what I do see is people working and somebody else looking over their shoulder and thinking, "Oh, that's a good idea!"... so, they're not wasting time in workrooms'. (VP).*

The recognition of the lecturer as having a unique set of knowledge, both explicit and tacit, was seen in how managers deployed staff. They were assigned work such that they taught to their knowledge strengths and used their tacit capabilities: *'when we're time-tabling, we know very well that there's no point in putting that particular guy in with that type of group of students, because it won't work and it's no good saying well we'll change the guy, you can't'.* (KK DHTT). The managers rejected any notion of the lecturer as a 'Jack/Jill of all trades', who could be slotted into any classroom to deliver any subject. Their sagacity directed them away from the deployment of lecturers regardless of fit, recognising that this damaged the quality of provision: *'The more that happens, the more the risk that somewhere down the line there are going to be difficulties for quality'* (OB HTT).

The development of formal skills was addressed by the Staff Development Manager, who organised the CPD days for staff. The agenda of the CPD training on these days was set by a committee of staff and managers. Some training was legally mandatory i.e. college managers had to deliver this to staff (e.g. Equality and Diversity training), but the majority of CPD was determined according to the expressed wishes of staff. 'Away days' where team members participated in learning through physical activities like adventure training and orienteering, were also considered CPD, as they were seen as important for effective teambuilding.

One very encouraging feature of the process of knowledge acquisition within this college, was the value placed on incoming staff members' experience and prior learning. The Principal met with all new members of staff after about a six month period with the intention of, on the one hand enquiring whether they were settling in, and on the other, to ask if they had any suggestions for how things might be improved. This valuing of all staff suggestions/ideas was also demonstrated by the way in which neither length of service nor

status excluded them from proposing CPD topics: *'We try to get staff involved. We try and run the courses that they ask for.'* (SDM). *'There is a working party, which decides and that's made up of academic and support staff.'* (HRM).

It was very clear that senior managers saw it as their duty to ensure that what they introduced to the college from external agendas, contributed to the wealth of knowledge and provision for students. That is, initiatives weren't just mechanistically covered regardless of appropriateness, which seemed to be the case in the other two colleges: *'it's about being sensible and realistic in approaching things, rather than jumping on a band wagon and going mad on something'* (VP). One such initiative was using the VLE system, Moodle, which was described in the vignette in the last chapter. Managers instituted new VLE policies and procedures to ensure they were workable in the context of teaching. To do this, a core of lecturers spread across all the teams who would be using the system in their classroom practice, were involved from the outset. The training in Moodle and team work to create VLE resources was guided by a seconded manager, who was able to fashion the VLE as the training and staff usage evolved. This bottom – up organic process of learning and development for the staff contrasted greatly with the top-down mandatory VLE training enforced in college A. This style of management suggests that the members of staff were regarded as having something valuable to contribute, other than just carry out routine tasks. As the lecturers were regarded as sensitive human beings, the approach to Moodle was one of persuasion and enticement, rather than that of threat and sanction. This somewhat organic introduction of the VLE led to a situation where all staff felt they had some degree of ownership and thus became an integral part of Moodle's successful implementation.

## **6.5 Conclusion on the dimensions of autonomy, responsibility and knowledge**

This chapter has dealt with the three dimensions of practice: autonomy, responsibility and knowledge. Having outlined the nature of the three dimensions in the case-study sites, it is useful to draw the dimensions together and sum up the practice that emerged in each of the colleges. As stated in the introduction to this chapter, each college formed a unique institution situated in its own locality. The college's internal milieu was formed as the external demands were mediated by the managers and passed into the organisation. The practice of lecturers was therefore situated in this milieu.

In college A practice was interpreted, by and large, by managers as the straight forward delivery of information to students. This was in keeping with the macro level definition of practice equating with delivery of standardised materials, with little need for interpretation by the lecturer, as was illustrated in chapter 3. Following this approach, practitioners were viewed as staff akin to the 'learning professionals' model posited by Guile and Lucas (1999) and thus they were expected to take on large amounts of administrative and pastoral work outside the classroom. ITT and staff development were focussed on transferring skills and information, preset by a central government agenda and implemented regardless of applicability or contextual relevance to the college. Little if any discussion of pedagogy appeared to happen, as on the whole, staff members were not seen by most of the management as having ideas that could be beneficial to the college's success; one novice actually complained of being treated like an idiot.

What became apparent in the analysis was that the management wanted to create a maximalist approach to practice through the 'learning professional' model, that is to say, lecturers were expected to commit themselves to activities beyond those stated in the job contract. In reality, often middle managers' centralised control had a tendency to result in situations that were detrimental to practitioners' commitment. It can be argued that some novices were showing the tendency towards an individualistic interpretation of effort, seeing their responsibility as that of reaching targets and going no further. However the excessive demands by management for more work to be done by fewer people, had led to the situation where minimalist, individualistic orientations were not able to be pursued, because the practitioners were unable to resist increased demands on their time and workload. Thus in reality an all pervasive coercive autonomy had developed, where 'no' was not an acceptable response to a management request. Some experienced lecturers were committed to a fulfilling a deeper sense of responsibility towards their students and colleagues. However, the managers' tendency to concentrate on tracking systems and audit regimes meant that there was minimal recognition of these efforts. Experienced lecturers felt alienated, under valued by managers and were deprived of forums in which they could share their knowledge and experience with others, i.e. supportive and creative workroom environments were absent. This was to the detriment of the maximalist expression of practice, which paradoxically, managers claimed they wanted to protect and encourage.

In college C the role of managers in determining lecturers' autonomy, responsibility and knowledge was limited. The SMT may have wished to employ lecturers as flexible 'learning professionals', but through lack of managerial control this was not achieved. Whereas in college A, management control was extensive, in college C managers were still contesting effective control over some of the technical aspects of lecturers' autonomy and they were ineffectual in determining discretionary autonomy. Responsibility of lecturers towards students was affected by management weaknesses in providing line management. This, for some confident practitioners resulted in a positive and successful engagement with responsibility towards students, whereas others, who were not sufficiently able to self manage, exhibited gaps in their practice. Where lecturers had sufficient wherewithal and calibre to be self managing, ineffectual line management was often relished, as for these people problem solving was seen as a natural part of the role of a self managing lecturer, rather like in the years prior to incorporation.

On the whole, only at times of external inspection and audit, did departments and particular groups of staff fall under the spotlight of management and their wish to exert control. In college A, management contrived to keep their monitoring at a very high level at all times, and then to increase it further, when an inspection was pending. By contrast in college C, outside of such inspection windows, groups of staff were mainly left to their own devices.

In college C, ITT and information on legislative changes e.g. ECM, were provided by mandatory CPD programmes, but these were not necessarily successfully enforced. Much CPD appeared to have been left to evolve as ad hoc projects concerning groups of interested practitioners, brought together by peer arrangements. Those staff who were in need of closer supervision and who to some extent lacked strong independent initiative, appeared to receive very little in the way of CPD and little if any support from their line managers. As a result, they often expressed anxiety in their work and fear for what the future could hold.

The degradation of practice in college C emerged as originating from an entirely different set of circumstances than those observed in college A. Whereas in college C the SMT exerted very little influence over the vast majority of its staff, in college A it emerged that middle managers, in particular, resorted to excessive control over lecturers and their practice. In college C, the strong self managing lecturers possessed knowledge and a

positive sense of responsibility towards their personal development and subsequently towards their students. However, this was not recognised by line managers and therefore, somewhat to the detriment of the college, not systematically exploited. In college A, by substantially reducing lecturers' autonomy and knowledge in the pursuit of the 'learning professional' model, the managers appeared to try, albeit not always successfully, to systematically purge practice of the effective tacit constituents of teaching. Thus it can be seen that in both colleges A and C degraded forms of lecturer practice emerged. In the former there was over control by managers, whereas in the latter, there was a lack of control. In both colleges there may have been flourishing emerging in the student college experience, but for the lecturing staff this degradation of practice greatly restricted the chance of it happening for them.

The previous two colleges emerged as showing some degree of degraded form of practice, which worked against the formation of a college community of creative practitioners. By contrast in college B, however, practice was seen to have features that presented substantial opportunities for lecturers to flourish. Considering their lecturers as 'learning professionals', which appeared to be on the college A and college C's agendas, was an anathema to college B's ethos and therefore not viewed as a desired management goal.

However, in the dimension of responsibility there were some negative caveats about practice on this site, college B. Firstly, one inevitable result of the commercialisation of the sector has meant that the practitioners had lost the power to decide who they teach and this external demand is universal to the sector. That is to say, maintaining numbers of 'bums on seats' protected the balance sheet, regardless of the appropriateness of the clientele. However, experienced lecturers pragmatically reconciled themselves to this. Secondly, trust could be withdrawn if a member of staff was seen to abuse goodwill in terms of the prevailing hegemony, which was accepted and reinforced, at all staff levels, including by the trade union representatives. This would suggest that practitioners were given high degrees of responsibility, provided they submitted themselves unconditionally to the prevailing culture. The highly experienced and insightful college management team appeared to deploy staff carefully and to make the most of the human resources available to them. The Principal, SMT and first level line managers systematically worked to make sure that lecturers' practice, i.e. effective teaching of students, was as protected as far as possible from incidental distractions, such as extraneous government agendas or faddish

and subsequently, evanescent initiatives. The result of this was highly successful outcomes for the students and for the college, in terms of maintaining its good reputation and meeting, and even exceeding performance targets. What became evident was that the practice identified here was by far the least degraded of the three college sites and regarding autonomy and knowledge, there appeared to be very few if any negative barriers to the flourishing of practitioners.

When this site B is compared with the other two colleges and quite possibly, to many other colleges throughout England and Wales, who accept the macro level approach that ‘practice equals delivery’ (see chapter 3), it is seen to be substantially different. The college did not appear to accept that ‘practice equates with delivery’ and by and large, their management style countermanded this discourse. The tacit knowledge and life experiences of members of staff were recognised and highly valued and management proactively sought to disseminate good practice throughout the institution. Moreover, staff interests and talents were positively exploited by the Principal, with the aim of securing the future of the college through the initiation of new courses and the extension of HE provision, for example. To date, the college has proved a very successful institution, highly regarded in the FE sector. Paradoxically, it would appear that most of the management ethos in this institution would be seen to be at loggerheads with the ‘one size fits all’ approach to lecturers’ practice being pushed down from the macro level.

## **6.6 Conclusion to chapter**

To conclude, this discussion chapter on lecturers’ autonomy, responsibility and knowledge, and hence how they resolve practice, has demonstrated that the nature of engagement in calculative regimes, both at the meso and micro levels, is distinctive for each institution. This is because a multitude of factors are being resolved. Two colleges showed a somewhat restricted and controlled framework for developing the dimensions of practice and as a consequence there is much evidence that practice overall has suffered from significant degrees of degradation on these sites.

In this thesis practice has been taken to mean situated workplace practical judgement by lecturers and thus the narratives of lecturers have been used to demonstrate practitioners figuring out practice methodologies. However, at this concluding stage of the thesis each

organisation's specific features are reintroduced to allow for an exploration of the college's internal environment, in relation to the wider post compulsory education and training market in which the institution is set.

The concept of structured fields (see section 3.3.4) would appear to be appropriate for developing an analytical basis for a discussion of the relationship between macro forces and an institution's internal practices. This conceptual approach will be adopted in chapter 7 to explain possible links between the macro demands placed on the case-study colleges and the responses of each SMT in managing these. The form that these responses take has implications for the institution's economies of performance and, as a result, affect how lecturers resolve their construction of practice.



## **Chapter 7: Conclusion**

### **7.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter dealt with the three dimensions of practice: autonomy, responsibility and knowledge. Having outlined the nature of the three dimensions at the case-study sites, it is useful to draw them together, sum up the community of practice in each college and look for some explanation for the pattern of degraded practice that emerged i.e. why was practice substantially degraded in colleges A and C but less so in college B.

In this thesis a micro level of study has investigated the elements of lecturers' practice, i.e. autonomy, responsibility and knowledge, within the contexts of their workplaces. As proposed in chapter 2, to get an understanding of professionals' practice it is necessary to examine all the factors and actors that are involved. That is to say, to understand the practice methodologies used by the practitioner requires insight into the three different levels of resources involved: macro, meso and micro (Kitchener, 1999; Harrison and Ahmad, 2000; Kragh Jespersen, 2002). In the concluding stage of this thesis, an attempt is made to make links between the micro and the other two levels and to make relational explanations of the forms of practice found in the colleges. This addresses how the macro field, namely the wider policy arena of post compulsory education and training, relates to the meso level and how, in turn, this institutional context impinges on the practitioners' reconciliations of the college workplace's economies of performance with their personal ecologies of practice.

The concept of the structured field as discussed in section 3.4.4 is applied to the post compulsory education and training arena. That is to say, it is accepted that the position of each college in the structured field is determined by its levels and reserves of academic capital and these factors affect their strategic ability to take an advantage over competing providers. A college's principal and senior managers have a range of possible responses which determine and are determined by this position-taking. This limits or enables their capacity to make open and sensitive translation of external demands into institution specific arrangements i.e. in generating the economies of performance in their college. The aim in this chapter is to look beyond the weaknesses and strengths of staff, students and managers in each college and to provide illumination as to why lecturers' negotiated forms of practice emerged as degraded in two colleges and considerably less degraded in the third.

As posited in 3.3.4, whether a college is considered as vested with academic renown, is largely defined by the nature of the full time programmes it provides and if it does provide academic courses, whether the outcomes are successful. The college's field conditions depend on the college's academic capital forces and ultimately, through these, the level of dominance it can achieve and maintain amongst the competition. The case-study colleges' reserves of academic capital are now considered.

## **7.2 Position taking in the field: vocational versus academic**

It is generally accepted that academic courses in the post compulsory education and training arena in the UK, such as 'A' levels, are 'the gold standard' when compared with vocational education and training. All three of the colleges in this study had substantial provision for delivering level 3 vocational qualifications that require very little heavy machinery or technical equipment, namely, generic vocational training in areas such as Business Studies or Health and Social Care. These programmes are problematic in that only a few of them directly qualify a student for employment and thus they can only loosely be termed 'vocational'. The knowledge content of such broadly constructed qualifications often seems to serve no specific educational or vocational goal and to be of unclear origin. 'A' levels, although flawed in some respects, still hold credibility, particularly with employers and parents. As indicated in

section 3.3.4, some vocational fields have been less successful than others in developing a college based curricula that have achieved credibility.

All three of the case study colleges also provided academic programmes. Two of the colleges in this study, A and C, provided academic courses to a fairly small percentage of their student body and made no claims to this being their main form of business. For college B about half of its provision to students was academic. Moreover, the success or failure of 'A' level provision in each of the two case-study colleges with very small academic provision, was still judged against the outcomes of rival institutions which were specifically in the business of delivering high quality 'A' levels, e.g. sixth form colleges. Academic renown for colleges and their rival protagonists is accrued by: excellent Ofsted inspection outcomes, good averaged 'A' level points achieved by students, strong positioning in league tables on value added, and substantial numbers of students progressing to universities. Their competitive position-taking is based on rivalry concerning these indicators of 'academic' strength.

In addition to the two types of provision described above, a third and fourth type of provision are vocational courses which require high levels of investment and those vocational courses that are highly specialised. The former requires substantial initial capital investment e.g. construction and engineering, and hence often eliminates the likelihood of local competitors from establishing similar provision. Whereas the latter, e.g. marine studies and stone masonry, having highly restricted demand, are in a situation where only a very few colleges throughout the country are able to sustain such provision, year on year. Thus, these two types of provision take on monopolistic traits, which, like with any monopoly, can provide extremes of service, i.e. very good or very bad. The onus is then left with the local LSC to ensure that their provision is of at least a satisfactory standard. The LSC serves to replace market competition from other local providers. Thus it becomes largely irrelevant to competitor colleges and sixth forms whether an FE college performs well or not in these subject areas, as they do not have an interest in this provision. Even though some of the industrially orientated provision in colleges A and C has been awarded COVE status, such accolades have not been translated, by and large, into currency that is recognised by the local community and industry. Much of the evidence from industrial leaders throughout the country backs up this view, as they constantly appear to eschew such awards, preferring to sing the praises of the academic route for success. Under the marketisation of further education, 'A' levels appear to have held their own as having a market value, whereas, non 'A' level provision i.e. vocational, more recently under the aegis of the LSC has had to establish a form of pseudo market based on the narrow terms of calculative regimes. Hence, given that two colleges A and C concentrate on the three areas of provision other than 'A' levels, this researcher would argue that they are on shaky ground when it comes to developing their academic capital.

From the above, notable factors in the field for post compulsory education and training emerge, namely, the different pattern of provision and different emphasis given to academic provision between the different colleges. Moreover, although vocational education is said to be the primary purpose of the sector and forms a large part of the work done by GFECs, 'A' levels and other academic courses, such as the International Baccalaureate, still have significant prestige in the field, being markers of academic learning that are valued by HEIs and employers and are reputation building for schools and colleges that are able to deliver them. In the case of colleges,

a key determinant of academic capital is success in the delivery of 'A' levels, because these qualifications still embody academic prestige throughout the sector, as discussed in section 3.3.4. As suggested by Naidoo (2004) when referring to less prestigious universities, an institution with little academic capital may be more likely to be subject to the forces of commodification and to operate on the lines of a business model. The less prestigious vocationally focussed colleges such as sites A and C do not have reserves of academic capital with which to repel or reconfigure the macro level demands and may have adopted corporate performance as the way forward for their operations.

The above suggests that the college specific economies of performance that are generated by managers in colleges A and C are more likely to be based on the calculative regime and consistent with the market orientated model that has been rolled out in the sector. The style or approach taken by senior managers, likewise, will be calculative when they are translating external factors into the internal arrangements of the college. Although there may be different levels and forms of capital accruing to different colleges across the PCET field, this variation does not imply that academic capital poor colleges are condemned to serve their students less well in terms of teaching and learning standards than rich colleges. Similarly, it does not suggest that capital rich colleges can afford to be operationally less financially astute than colleges with poor levels of academic capital. However, the external demands placed on the institutions and the responses of the college managers are structured by and in turn structure the field. That is to say, academically rich colleges will most likely be able to protect their position towards the head of league tables. Furthermore, until policy initiatives address the uneven relationship between academic and vocational education, the situation of minority of 'haves' and a majority of 'have nots' will remain unchallenged. Until government policies address wider issues of social inequalities, the deep seated divide in status between vocational and academic education in contemporary society will continue.

### **7.3 Position in the field and implications for economies of performance**

#### **7.3.1 College A**

Using the concept of the structured field, the macro field and the degraded nature of practice seen in college A can be considered through the weak position of this college in the local market for education and training in relation to other providers. Earlier, in section 5.2.1, it was seen that in this college, a large number of learners were recruited onto level one and level two courses, as previously they had not achieved sufficient grades to enter at level 3. This mass recruitment appeared to be relatively new for this college, and experienced lecturers commented that whereas the college had once recruited ‘the cream’ of 16 year olds, nowadays they felt bitter that the college got the ‘leftovers’. Once the college began to take marginalised students and extend its vocational courses, it was probably difficult to retain numbers of academically focussed students who may have selected, by choice, to attend better performing rival sixth forms. The results of the few ‘A’ level students in this college were weak in comparison with other providers and most level 3 provision entailed the delivery of general vocational qualifications. These vocational qualifications did not appear to prepare students for employment. One lecturer described students being shepherded from level 1 to level 2 and then on to level 3, with no apparent purpose or educational achievement. The college dealt with the training and education of learners who would once never have been in education post 16 years and this was consistent with the Governors’ claim to be running an inclusive institution.

Mass education and training was the purpose of this GFEC, as perhaps it may be argued is the function of some of the less prestigious higher education providers. This college with low emphasis on academic provision was likely to have little in the way of academic capital and have very few reserves other than that of economic capital. It was dependent on the annual funding allocation it received from the macro level policy makers and any fees it could earn through contracts. The relation with the policy makers was strictly audited and target driven. As the college worked on an economic basis within the field at the macro level, it is reasonable to assume that finance and the annual ‘bottom line’ determined its overall institutional strategic framework. A strategy available to senior management was to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the day to day operational running of the college, to enable the corporation to build up financial reserves and thus to try to improve its field positioning by increasing its economic wealth. Thus, given the absence of any other reserves that would equip the college to be able to resist macro level pressures to move to a totally commercialised operation, efficiency and effectiveness were the only option available for the governing body. That is to say, there was a paucity of academic capital.

### **7.3.2 College C**

The questions that need to be addressed for college C are: does the macro field position of the college account for the degraded practice that emerged and is this situation essentially similar to college A. In the thumbnail sketch of this site given in 5.4.3, it was seen that this college had little in the way of an academic reputation: a low percentage of its students followed 'A' levels, it had no enviable record of student achievement in entrance to elite universities and it had no outstanding track record in Ofsted inspection results – the last inspection overall was a grade 3. As was discussed above for college A, the provision in this college was largely of a non 'A' level nature with all the limitations identified above. The recent move into higher education involved engagement in the third type of HE provision, which was generally viewed as having a lesser academic status than that in both pre 1992 and post 1992 universities. In sum, college C had very little in the way of academic reserves and thus was weakly positioned within the field, solely reliant on its economic wealth relative to other players. It may be reasonable to assume that it is 'more likely to be buffeted by market forces' (Naidoo 2004:470), suggesting that similar to college A, a strictly calculative regime will be enforced in the economies of performance generated by managers, as they translate external demands into internal organisational arrangements.

Furthermore, as seen in section 5.4.1, college C consisted of many merged institutions all of which originally had their own management and operated as independent entities. The efforts of senior management had been insufficient to draw the merged campuses and departments closer together, and it remains doubtful if this could ever be achieved. The key problems preventing a unified corporation were the spatial isolation of the separate campuses and the range of businesses and delivery that the college was involved in. This meant lecturers on one of the campuses or in outreach offices rarely met or saw staff from anywhere else and tended to work as if they formed one entity and not part of a larger organisation. Line managers may have had more opportunity to work across campuses, but with members of senior management located at some distance from everyday operations, it could be a case of 'out of sight, out of mind' in the literal sense. Although previously colleges may have been merged in order to provide economies of scale for cost savings, or to 'rescue' failed smaller institutions, in reality, having a 'super sized college' was not proving beneficial in terms of managing staff. It is unsurprising that considerable inter departmental and inter campus variations in the economies of performance that lecturers had to negotiate, and forms of

practice emerged in this study. This state of affairs, where the college management is still trying and somewhat failing to give a coherent image of the college as a single entity, has limited its ability to create academic capital, in that the managers spend most of their time on this unification project rather than on looking for ways to boost its reputation.

#### **7.3.4 College B**

As with the two previous colleges, it is necessary to explore whether the position-taking in the macro field by college B offers any explanation for the largely non-degraded practice that emerged on this site. To estimate its position in the field, the provision of courses by college B can be examined to see how this differs from that of colleges A and C. In section 5.4.2, College B was described as an inclusive college similar to A and C. It had successful outcomes for both academic and non-academic students, delivering a range of vocational programmes and some key skills for those students who required additional help. Unlike colleges A and C, this college had a good record in academic achievement, sending many students to prestigious universities every year. It out performed its local rival GFECs, most local schools and could be considered to enjoy considerable status in its locality and to some extent nationally. This reputation had been achieved by constantly and consistently meeting audited performance targets. Unlike colleges A and C it received very strong Ofsted reports for many years and was considered as one of the ‘best’ nationally in terms of inspection results.

The college did not appear to accept that ‘practice equated with delivery’ and by and large, its managers countermanded this discourse in the systems that were developed and the sensitive style with which such economies of performance were applied in the workplace. The previous two colleges emerged with degraded forms of practice, which worked against the formation of a community of creative practitioners. By contrast in college B, practice was seen in to have features that presented substantial opportunities for lecturers to flourish. Deploying lecturers as ‘learning professionals’, which appeared to be on college A and C’s agendas, was an anathema to college B’s ethos and therefore not viewed as a desired management goal. The managers appeared to have gained the right to develop their own approach to staff and staff development (see chapter 6).

However, it is perhaps not surprising that college B exhibited so many positive features, which militated against degradation of practice, because such a large proportion of its

provision was in the highly marketable 'A' level arena, in which it excelled. Stakeholders in the local community and further a field showed high levels of respect for what was seen as the 'blue riband' or the 'gold standard' route for young people and consequently the college could easily enhance its capacity to increase its already substantial level of academic capital.

#### **7.4 The resolution of practice in academic capital poor and rich contexts**

The substantial fieldwork was carried out in three colleges and it was revealed that each one had evolved as a distinct entity since incorporation in 1992. Each had a particular operational culture and structure. The case-studies can now be grouped according to their academic capital reserves and relative positioning in the field. That is to say, some commonality in weak forces of academic capital was identified for colleges A and C, whereas, college B had more capital and enjoyed a much stronger field position.

In both colleges A and C degraded forms of lecturer practice emerged, however, in each case this was for contrasting reasons; in the former there was over control by managers, whereas in the latter, there was a lack of control. In college C the SMT exerted very little influence over the vast majority of its staff, whereas in college A it emerged that middle managers, in particular, resorted to excessive control over lecturers and their practice. In college C, some strong self managing lecturers possessed knowledge of and a positive sense of responsibility towards their personal development and subsequently towards their students. However, this was not recognised by line managers and therefore, somewhat to the detriment of the college, not systematically exploited.

Colleges A and C both appeared to exhibit situations where negotiations over practice were in the main worked out at the lecturer - manager level i.e. the meso level. The negotiations over practice were the management attempts to get lecturers to comply with macro policy makers' directives on practice. This would appear to be consistent with their poor reserves of academic capital, implying that the college managements will have little leverage in modifying macro level demands. College B showed a far more complex arrangement, in that this negotiation was taking place at both the meso level and with the external policy makers at the macro level. This was consistent with its stronger reserves and leverage with which it could reconstruct or remodel macro level demands. That is to say, in this institution it was not a given that all external directives would be incorporated, undiluted, into the college



milieu. This had a positive indirect effect on the scope and quality of opportunities for lecturers to take part in decision making regarding their practice.

#### **7.4.1 Micro - meso interface: over-control of practice in an academic capital poor site, the case of College A**

Using the concept of the structured field, it may be surmised that the economies of performance in this college were fiercely calculative, because the managers were constrained regarding the leeway with which they could respond to policy makers' demands for the commercialisation of their college. They had few reserves of academic capital with which to militate the effects of those policy makers' discourses that hollowed out lecturers' work i.e. they were obliged to take the view that lecturers' practice equated with delivery. The economies of performance in this college were thus strictly imposed in accordance with managers' operational concerns for effectiveness and efficiency. However, they could be insensitive towards staff and were sometimes aggressive, e.g. 'stripping out' under performing or possibly dissenting 'time served' staff, reorganising staff workrooms in a way that effectively destroyed communities and failing to allocate lecturers space to discuss and share tacit understanding of practice. As a result of this behaviour as pointed out in chapter 6 the outcomes often were the opposite to those desired.

In college A practitioners' day to day practice methodologies were to a large extent nonnegotiable, because the management team was attempting to impose a standard mode of delivery throughout the college. By so doing, their intended aim was to bring the daily operational functioning of their college in line with the rigours of a calculative regime, as has been rolled out across many areas of former welfare state public service providers. For the lecturers, this resulted in the systematic depletion of their practice in the dimensions of knowledge and autonomy owing to: the hollowing out of formal training, the removal of opportunities for informal learning in a cooperative, supportive environment and restriction of the lecturer's space for discretionary judgement in his/her work. Some experienced staff had the possibility of retaining previously formed methodologies, but novices who had known nothing other than the overly mechanistic top – down 'good practice', were left to rely on their own common sense and ability to be successful in their practice, i.e. there was little opportunity to receive guidance to externalise the essential tacit aspects of practice. Responsibility for lecturers was degraded, as it was interpreted by middle managers to mean compliance with the performance and audit targets. Some differences in the willingness to

comply with this interpretation of responsibility emerged when the narratives of experienced and novice lecturers were compared. It transpired that some of the former were trying to prioritise their responsibilities towards students, rather than meeting targets set by managers.

#### **7.4.2 Micro - meso interface: under control of practice on an academic capital poor site, the case of College C**

College C was found like college A to have little academic capital and had a subordinate position in the local field. This suggested that management had little leeway when attempting to adapt macro level agendas which insisted on the commercialisation of the college operations. From the research there was ample evidence of economies of performance structured on a business operational model, for example, attempts to achieve more control over the day to day operations relied on importing outside experts from the business world to key positions in the organisation, e.g. HR Director, Clerk to the Corporation, Staff Development Manager. Another strategy was to develop the capacities of the middle managers, so that they in turn could begin to manage lecturers and deploy them more effectively and efficiently for the organisation i.e. use the lecturers as ‘learning professionals’.

Thus far, little had been effectual in creating a systematically applied set of business driven economies of performance for this college. Lack of control was evident in ineffectual central operations by senior management and the constant reinterpretation of senior management’s directives, as they were passed down the hierarchy and across the campuses. This disorganisation had negative consequences for lecturers’ practice. A large number of those interviewed were in the position that they had to interpret their own job role, because it emerged that effective management across the college sites was very patchy. In some college departments where there were ‘problems’, staff were very much under the spotlight, however, in other areas management appeared to be almost non-existent. Some practitioners were kept in a state of anxiety, because they didn’t know how much responsibility they should take or the degree of autonomy with which to approach their duties and consequently did not know whether they were doing a good job or not. The development of practitioners’ knowledge appeared to be hindered by the inadequate provision of formal training, informal learning opportunities and the general indifference of middle managers to their staff’s professional development. Recruiting what the HR manager considered more ‘professional’ lecturers and retaining them would not occur until working conditions improved for the

majority of staff, and until the operational management improved, the college would not be able to address this.

#### **7.4.3 The dual interface scenario in an academic capital rich context: micro-meso and meso-macro resolution of practice in College B**

In comparison with the other two colleges, college B had considerable academic capital in terms of its inspection track record and high levels of achievement in ‘A’ levels. It enjoyed position-taking by being able to exert strategies of academic ‘reputation’ in addition to its economic reserves in the local field. With these reserves, college B could be compared to elite universities which are able to reconfigure, and to some extent reject the demands that present day macro policy makers may wish to impose on institutions. This capital rich advantage in college B was summed up with regards to macro level policy, by one manager who reported that their Principal openly declared himself ‘*gloriously unafraid of government initiatives*’ (OB HTT). This dominant position-taking in the field that college B had, as compared with the weak position-taking of colleges A and C, suggested that managers had considerable leeway to modify or even reject the macro discourse concerning lecturers’ ‘practice as delivery’. Managers had the space develop their own economies of performance and pursued an appropriate style of working with lecturers that allowed for flourishing in their teaching.

For site B the macro discourse that ‘practice equated with delivery’ was antithetical to the college ethos. The way in which outside initiatives were introduced into the college was completely different than in colleges A and C. Macro level policy changes were considered very carefully and then, if it was deemed necessary, introduced to the college in a format and through processes that were sympathetic to the day to day operations e.g. Moodle, as described in vignette 5.3.4. In another case, that of the introduction of key skills, initially the CEO and the Senior Management Team took a compliant view and rolled out the initiative, college wide. However, having realised this to be a mistake and one that was interfering with staff teaching, they had the confidence to rectify the situation and adapted the initiative successfully to the college environment.

A united outlook from both managers and lecturers protected the ethos that practice in this college meant the ‘lecturer’s space’. This micro level space was read to mean nurturing the practitioner, so that he/she exercised discretion and was encouraged to use tacit and explicit

expertise in his/her teaching. However, as in most workplaces, lecturers did criticise their managers and found fault with the day to day operations of the college. This was reciprocated by managers who criticised members of staff who they felt were not pulling their weight and not being fully committed members of the organisation. A strong collegiate identity was carefully constructed by the management team, so that it influenced all levels of the organisation. Within this 'compact', lecturers were trusted as professionals who brought a wealth of talent to the organisation. Owing to the fact that lecturers were regarded as talented professionals, healthy debate and dissent over pedagogical issues was considered the norm. Managers and lecturers openly criticised the macro level authorities for the way that FE was run as a business and for the burdens that this placed on them. However, there was some evidence presented that if a member of staff was seen to go outside of what was acceptable, in the collegiate sense, they could swiftly be seen by the majority of the college to be working against its interests, regardless of the justice of the case.

In college B the dimensions of autonomy and knowledge that practitioners brought to their work were highly valued and many steps were taken to nurture these so that staff and students could flourish. Managers made sure that, as far as possible, the lecturers had space to practice, i.e. that they were not distracted with unnecessary administration as part of their duties. In spite of such protection, some more unreasonable macro level demands had threatened to undermine the positive college environment. This trickle down effect was seen in the increased work that all members of staff faced and in the fact that initiatives could not be completely ignored by the management.

Regarding the dimension of responsibility, there were some negative caveats. The SMT knew that to be judged as successful, the college had to meet targets on retention and achievement, with tacit acceptance that this could have a negative impact on practitioners' freedom to choose between students. Secondly, trust could be withdrawn if a member of staff was seen to abuse goodwill in terms of the prevailing hegemony, which was accepted and reinforced, at all staff levels, including by the trade union representatives. This would suggest that practitioners were given high levels of responsibility, provided they submitted themselves unconditionally to the prevailing culture, one that was about maintaining a long established reputation as a good college.

The local LSC and Ofsted inspectors had a high level of respect for the institution, because of its outstanding success rates and as a consequence possibly exerted looser control which allowed for the college to have greater discretion in how far to pursue and/or modify macro level policy initiatives. Practice in this college, like the other two, appeared to be degraded in respect of practitioners' responsibility, but in college B this was not allowed to deter lecturers from creating opportunities for flourishing through managers' careful protection of the other two dimensions.

### **7.5 Addressing the key research question 'how do lecturers develop their practice?'**

This section examines the provision of learning opportunities for lecturers in each case-study college, to develop a holistic view of staff learning in the different institutions. The practitioners, institutional arrangements and the structured backdrop of the competitive field of further education are brought together to give an overview of the community of practice in each college.

As was discussed in chapters 2 and 3, at the macro level, there has been a move towards lecturers' practice being reduced to a hollowed out and mechanistic definition, in an attempt to produce a standardised concept. This has been taken as meaning that instead of having the role and status of an autonomous knowledge worker, the lecturer is now considered to need no skills other than that of delivery. By this discourse in many FE institutions the lecturer is nowadays not considered the person who determines how and what learning takes place. It has been suggested in chapter 6 that this macro discourse on lecturers' practice, in many instances, has been translated into policy and practice at the meso/college level, by using the lecturer as a 'learning professional'. The 'learning professional' phenomenon requires lecturers to be compliant with the college culture and to some extent withdraw from debates about what teaching is for. Moreover, he/she is expected to deliver standardised 'off the shelf lectures' in a uniform fashion.

These two calculative approaches i.e. at the macro and meso levels, towards lecturers and their practice impacted in different ways on the nature and provision of learning for lecturers in the three case-study colleges. This was dependent upon, firstly, whether the college had taken up these approaches and secondly was then able to deliver them effectively. How lecturers construct their practice is situated in the context of the learning environment in

which they are working. The following section reaches some conclusions on the community of practice that emerged in each college.

### **7.5.1 College A**

The managers in college A, by and large, considered lecturers' practice as a form of delivery. This conclusion was supported by extensive evidence that emerged during the course of the study. Firstly, managers were constructing uniform sets of materials and lesson plans that were being disseminated throughout the college, for lecturers to use to deliver in classes. Secondly, lecturers were deployed interchangeably, meaning that some delivered subjects outside of their field of expertise and there appeared to be little concern about the quality of lectures delivered, just so long as someone took the classes. The reliance on part-time lecturers, provided through an employment agency, created a situation where staffing consistency had become problematic. Thirdly, formal induction and training programmes were effectively reduced to obligatory 'paper' qualifications and mandatory attendance was seen as 'going through the motions' by the participants. Lastly, it may be concluded that the lecturer's job involved more than teaching lessons. Consistent with the 'learning professional' model of the lecturer, lecturers were expected to sort out students' pastoral problems, deal with large amounts of administration and participate in marketing and recruiting students.

This had important consequences on this institution's culture of learning. The training and development that a 'learning professional' requires is, by definition, straightforward. As a consequence, at this college, training was based on the explicit skills that staff needed to perform routine tasks, administrative and bureaucratic procedures. When external authorities and policy makers varied the audit demands placed on the college, the lecturers were compulsorily re-trained in the appropriate skills, to follow the new procedures. As teaching was also considered to be a mechanistic process i.e. it was the delivery of pre-set materials in pre-set formats, teacher training was also considered to be a set of explicit skills. These skills were explained to novices in the form of classroom procedures and it was not deemed necessary try to address the complexities or dilemmas inherent in teaching. The agendas for CPD programmes and staff development days were set by the managers to meet the requirements of external policy makers and to keep lecturers' explicit skills up to date, in accordance with these changes. Unfortunately for the college their low margins of academic capital meant that they had little choice but to import virtually all macro level initiatives into

the college arena. That is to say, having little academic capital meant that it did not have the power to negotiate/moderate external demands placed upon it and consequently was obliged to accept them in an undiluted form.

The culture of learning at the institutional level appeared to have little understanding or respect for lecturers' tacit knowledge and the need for it to be nurtured. The tacit understanding of teaching, held by experienced and novice practitioners, was generally disregarded because it did not fit with the espoused 'practice equals delivery' discourse. Thus debates that challenged this were seen to be irrelevant and needed to be discouraged. Informal learning opportunities for lecturers had been actively destroyed, perhaps unintentionally, because long standing sharing networks that had previously emerged amongst colleagues in workrooms had been interfered with by managers, when they reorganised the staff workrooms. That is, the natural forum for lecturers to externalise their tacit knowing through chatting and informally collaborating had been removed. Little had been successfully undertaken by managers to create supportive environments in the newly configured workrooms. Attempts by them to introduce 'Teaching and Learning Champions' met with a lukewarm response and few applicants; a previous initiative on 'Teaching and Learning Squares' collapsed when the member of staff responsible left.

Although a learning culture was something that the managers thought they would like to have as part of their college's community of practice, little evidence of one was seen at this college.

### **7.5.2 College C**

For staff in college C, the issue of learning and developing their practice was problematic. For experienced lecturers, if they were located in a stable well run department and if there were sufficient lecturers of strong calibre, practice was developed between them. It is possible that novices could have learnt from being participants in such a community. For many other experienced lecturers, no such community existed and they, like their fellow novices in the weaker teams, relied on their own interpretations of what they should be teaching and how they should be working with the students.

The above situation appeared to be inconsistent with the claims by managers about staff learning in this college. They were convinced that they were gradually taking control of the formal processes of induction, training and staff development across the many college sites. Previously, as admitted by one of the management team ‘there was no management’ and so this raises the question of why the change in approach. It is most likely to have come about because of pressures from outside of the college, put on the Senior Management Team to ensure that their lecturers undertook compulsory training. Agencies such as Ofsted and the LSC were demanding that the college improved its standards to comply with audit and if they did not, there would be serious negative consequences for the college. For example, at the macro level Ofsted were requiring that all staff were trained in ECM.

It would appear that the formalised training and development regime that the Senior Management Team would have liked to adopt in this college resembled that implemented in college A. Their preferred view of lecturers’ practice was that of routine performance and compliant delivery of required criteria. Training and learning for staff consequently focussed on explicit skills and upgrading these in line with macro policy developments. Some departmental managers had little regard for the staff other than as people to deliver lessons and as such, they didn’t require or receive much investment, regarding training inputs and little, if any, attention was paid to the tacit dimension of knowledge. Reflection was identified by management as part of the process of teaching, in theory, but in reality, they took little responsibility for creating environments or opportunities where such reflection could take place and, by and large, considered it to be the duty of individual members of staff to avail themselves of this. Poorly handled reflection on work led to negative consequences, with some practitioners left in high states of anxiety. In these circumstances rather than being a positive thing potentially leading to flourishing, reflection was viewed as a thing to be avoided.

The lack of effective management throughout the college sites perversely had a positive effect on the learning culture in some departments, because a regime as found in college A could not be established. No systematic version of approved ‘good practice’ had been arrived at by management, as compared with the situation in college A and again, in contrast to college A, dissemination channels did not function across this college. Therefore, some departments in some areas of college C, by neglect, allowed some practitioners to form temporary and possibly unsustainable communities of practice, in which they were able to



exploit potential opportunities for flourishing. These autonomous practitioners were able to share their tacit understanding and improve their explicit skills in ways that they felt were appropriate and creative for the team. As in college A, the academic capital for college C emerged as being problematic, in that having very little, they had to try to implement all external initiatives and also capture the linked funding. However, their preoccupation with attempting to unify the institution at the time the interviews were taken, led to their level of success in this pursuit being inferior to that of college A. Sometimes initiatives were prioritised for the institution, however, where their implementation was to some degree successful on one site they were virtually nonexistent on another.

What emerged from discussions in colleges A and C was the notion that CPD activities were somewhat unconnected one off events. Even in the case of ITT spread over one or two years, there was no sense of this being a springboard to further development, but rather viewed within the context of ensuring that the cardinal numbers of staff receiving teaching qualifications reached government requirements. It is interesting to note that these colleges were both keen exponents of the calculative regime, which was fundamentally driven by numerical targets, both in terms of finance and student numbers and in balancing the annual budgets. Therefore, short term perspectives on staff CPD achievement, in statistical terms rather than in terms of the quality of its content would be a logical consequence under such managerial interpretations in further education. In other words, it is the easiest option to view CPD as just a numerical target, because the systems are already in place for this form of assessment and it would require a significant shift in direction and extra resources to prioritise the qualitative nature of the CPD programme.

### **7.5.3 College B**

College B offered a completely different narrative about developing a learning culture. As seen above, this needs to be considered in the light of the academic capital reserves accruing to this college. Moreover, the nurturing of effective lecturers could be interpreted as a long term investment strategy used by the corporation. In turn, as and when the staff improved their practice, the institution's academic capital would increase. During the course of this research, College B emerged as the only institution in which the managers were found to be creating a well organised and supportive environment for staff.

The first point of comparison with the other two colleges, is that the issue of staff learning was approached as an on-going process that developed talent and fostered diverse abilities. This process, for many novices was seen to begin with their attendance on the ITT programme. For college B, its distinguishing view of staff learning was that this was a long-term project. That is, learning was a strategy to ensure that potential talent was captured and capitalised on within the organisation. The approach may be summed up as treating lecturers as talented, sentient professionals who brought tacit insight and understanding to teaching; a lot more than just the ability to deliver a lesson.

The college managers recognised that staff workrooms were extremely important venues for collaboration and the sharing of ideas and strategies for teaching. In comparison with college A, the arrangement of staff workrooms in B was far more successful. The situation in college B appeared to be what managers in college A intended to create, but failed to achieve through their mismanagement and insensitivity. Concerning college C, some workrooms may have resembled those found in college B. More frequently though, they were not safe spaces, and thus were potentially destructive to the individuals concerned and unlikely to offer an environment for any sharing of practice.

Evidently, in this college, there was no simple compliance with the macro discourse that saw lecturers as deliverers. Moreover, there was no tolerance of the view that lecturers' abilities amounted to nothing more than a set of skills, in which they were regularly upgraded. The learning about teaching, improving practice methodologies and developing pedagogical understanding, took place within subject areas and between likeminded groups of lecturers. Line managers were appointed to their posts because they had extensive backgrounds in teaching, gained through many years of practical experience often within college B. These established managers and talented, experienced colleagues were the main initiators of ideas about 'learning by doing' situations and real-life 'problem solving', in which they involved their less experienced colleagues. However, this leading role did not exclude less experienced members of staff from being encouraged to put forward their own ideas for CPD and being valued for their contribution. In such ways the tacit and explicit dimensions of practitioners' knowledge could be expounded, debated and new methodologies arrived at. A culture of learning in which professionals could flourish was created with the active participation of both managers and teaching staff.

The concept of the structured field posits that an organisation's internal arrangements and policies are configured as a strategy that preserves or promotes the organisation's field position. The decision in this college to actively create a community of practice within appropriately organised, stable staff workrooms, to develop the nurturing of lecturers' tacit and explicit know how, was a deliberate strategy. College B was looking to the long-term quality of service, but colleges A and C could not prioritise this as they were perpetually concerned with short-term targets. Once a community of practice was underway, the fostering of practice was rewarded for college B in ever improving teaching and student outcomes. This in turn would contribute to the college's academic capital reserves, ultimately arriving at a state of self-perpetuating returns e.g. in meeting performance targets and Ofsted requirements. That is provided the culture of the institution is not subject to a fundamental change, e.g. bringing in a new CEO who possesses completely different orientations.

## **7.6 General conclusions on the field**

Before moving on to making recommendations based on the outcomes of college B, it is necessary to take a step back and comment on the general situation regarding FE colleges and lecturers. Previously, some literature on lecturers' work processes looked for a means to reverse the managerial project in colleges and somehow return the lecturers' workplace to that found in pre-incorporation days. In keeping with more recent literature, this thesis found its three colleges firmly bound within the managerialist calculative regime. There was no indication that the managerial project was coming to an end or becoming less rigorous in the LSS. The nostalgic views in some of the literature have been misleading. Ever since the demise of the apprenticeship system in the late 1960s and 1970s, the FE sector has had difficulty in defining an identity and remit. College lecturers, pre-incorporation, were often afforded complete autonomy and on occasion were known to abuse this trust. If there is to be a comprehensive effective post 16 education system it does require national standards for all. However, the key area of debate appears to revolve around who decides what these national standards are and how should they be achieved. It is government policy that now rigorously determines what GFECs are supposed to be doing and many individual institutions have little room for manoeuvre under this control.

Accepting the above, this researcher takes the view that for the present, managerialism is in all colleges and is here to stay. Thus it could be argued, that the goal should be to run calculative regimes effectively and efficiently in a flourishing environment for both staff and students. The experiences of college B have demonstrated that these features do not have to be mutually exclusive. However, the circumstances that have been highlighted for colleges A and C in the above discussions, in particular their low base level of academic capital, make the fulfilment of such a project that much more difficult. That is to say their position-taking in the field is inferior to that of college B and they do not enjoy the dominance exerted by it.

It remains for this study to conclude with proposals for how FE colleges could enhance performance, by improving the workplace environment in which lecturers practice. Obviously, as this whole thesis has lain out, this has to be considered in the context of all levels of negotiations that affect practitioners, i.e. the macro, meso and micro strata.

### **7.7 Learning from colleges A, B and C about improving lecturers' practice and proposals to facilitate this.**

The weak position-taking of colleges within a field may have helped push the less prestigious, vocational colleges in this study to adopt strictly calculative approaches towards lecturers' practice. It may be argued that in colleges such as college B the management always had more room to manoeuvre regarding macro policy initiatives and they could consider long term issues and make investments for the future. Notwithstanding this uneven field, this researcher would argue that there is still room for college managers to be more progressive in the ways they motivate and get the best possible teaching from lecturers. In so doing both lecturers and students would have the possibility of engaging in flourishing educational relationships. From the analysis of college B significant examples have emerged that could be rolled out by managers in other colleges and lead to the development of creative communities of practice.

The requirement for management to take lecturers' opinions seriously and for managers to approach lecturers in a more constructive manner was recognised in college B and perhaps in college A, but the Vice Principal interviewed in the latter, and his colleagues, had failed to act effectively to achieve this. Moreover, what senior managers in college A wanted lecturers to be, was largely at loggerheads with what the vast majority of practitioners wanted for

themselves. This outlook was similar to college C, in that there was a wide disparity between what managers thought was good for lecturers and what lecturers thought was good for themselves. Moreover, although senior managers expressed their disagreement with some of the most business orientated aspects of managerialism, they still adopted the view that as management they had all the right answers. When managers refuse to enter into a dialogue with lecturers, they are in effect depriving them of having a say in their practice, which is an extreme form of the proletarianisation of the professional.

The generative resources (Moldaschl 2002) of social relations, creativity and trust were found in college B, but were largely absent or unintentionally repressed in the other two colleges. Within the remit of their job, lecturers in college B were able to voice their dissent and argue with managers, (to some extent) over how best to teach. Moreover, they were, by and large, provided with a safe environment in which to do so. Discussion and debate support reflection and collective learning by staff and this seemed to take place constantly in the staff workrooms and during staff development days. It is the view of this researcher that colleges which exhibit the degraded features of practice, such as colleges A and C, would benefit from identifying and enhancing their generative resources as in college B, notwithstanding the fact that they are starting from a lower threshold. In other words, although there is not a level playing field across the FE sector, with regards to levels of academic capital, practitioners in colleges other than college B deserve to be given similar opportunities to this institution, so that flourishing can be introduced/reintroduced/further enhanced throughout FE.

The above discussions have highlighted the effectiveness of college B in creating opportunities for staff to interact and thus learn from one another, particularly with regards to the nature of staff workrooms. Moreover, their management actively encouraged staff to share experiences and expected reflective practice to take place during non-teaching time at the workplace. This leads to two proposals. Firstly, staff workrooms need to be sympathetically, organised so that appropriate colleagues with similar subject responsibilities are placed in close proximity. Secondly, time needs to be allocated for formal and informal reflection, so that practitioners have the opportunity to improve their teaching practice. However, given the fear that occurred when some lecturers in college C were given time to reflect, it is important that a light touch monitoring is performed by management to ensure that staff are comfortable with such arrangements.

In colleges A and C, the HR departments were important players in each organisation, as reflected in the Governing Bodies' decision to allow the HR Directors positions on the Senior Management Teams. The HR function played a major role in operations and to support this, they had established large administrative teams to deal with personnel matters. This gave a legitimised power base to the proponents of 'commercialisation' in each college. HR managers, like the Quality Assurance and Training staff, tended to be drawn from the corporate business world and had little background in the field of education. These managers, firstly, did not see any reason to criticise the notion of applying 'commercialisation' to teaching and they accepted, unquestioningly, the macro agenda that lecturers' practice should be 'equated with delivery'. Secondly, when they did apply new concepts and ways of working to teaching staff they had no grasp of the ideologies and 'naturalised' collegiate traditions that were embedded in the staff body that they were attempting to manage. Thus their attempts were generally simplistic and to some extent showed a degree of naivety about educational institutions. An example of this was when those managers responsible for staff development in college A, including the QA manager, were surprised that few experienced staff had volunteered to be 'Teaching and Learning Champions', thus demonstrating their ignorance of what motivated established members of staff. However, perhaps surprisingly these business managers had been allocated an important role in over viewing the staff development programmes in both colleges A and C. Therefore for a third proposal it is suggested that more cohesive communities of practice could develop if principals employed experts who were deeply aware of the complexities of practice or, as in college B, they gave more credence to the insight and wisdom of long established experienced line managers in the handling of human resource issues.

The final important issue that has emerged is that managers need to reach a college wide agreement regarding staff responsibilities and this should not be left to them to decide alone. This should be regularly monitored so as to offload low level tasks, which lead to unnecessary workloads and distractions from teaching. Moreover, on the whole, college B's managers had the sense to realise that it is economically inefficient to require professional practitioners to perform secretarial duties and this could prove an incentive for colleges like A and C to offload such tasks to administrative staff. The management in college B showed the belief that lecturers should have duties that could not be directly linked to their teaching practice pared to a minimum and that there should be vigilance on their part to ensure that

this situation remained so as far as possible. Thus the fourth proposal from this thesis is that every effort should be made by college managers to ensure that lecturers' responsibilities are primarily pitched at a level, consistent with their professional position, regardless of whether it is tasks that are directly or indirectly linked with their teaching practice. However, given the increasing intensification in the FE sector brought about by the tight margins that exist in most colleges under the calculative regime, it is acknowledged that such restrictions make this extraordinarily difficult to achieve.

The learning opportunities offered to lecturers are important in enabling staff to handle the most complex areas of their work and the last recommendation addresses their formal learning at work. CPD works towards helping lecturers reconcile the 'outside – in' demands of the college milieu, with their 'inside – out' orientations towards their students, colleagues and work duties. This researcher believes that in the most effective learning environment lecturers are respected and regarded as professionals, who should be consulted about the areas in which they require CPD. This was suggested by the systems used in college B, where training agenda items were chosen collectively from suggestions made by lecturers and managers. Through the inclusion of issues that the lecturers want to have addressed, development and training may potentially broaden out the present narrow performance driven agenda to address wider, more complex issues of education and teaching

During the course of this study in-house ITT programmes emerged as needing to contribute more than they do at present for some novices. A greater focus of formal staff development programmes on pedagogy may prevent the 'therapeutising' of the student experience or the tendency to do social work amongst certain groups of students, from becoming the purpose of some lecturers' interventions. However, this can only be achieved if the in-house provision of ITT is quality assured to national standards for its pedagogic content and practice standards for novice lecturers, regardless of whether they are teaching on vocational or academic programmes. This can be achieved by close collaboration between HEI faculties of education and FE teacher trainers, so that the ITT programme forms the beginning of a long-term process through which a novice becomes a fully fledged lecturer. As was seen in college B, through engaging in a continuous process of training novices, the college management gained the benefits of fostering a strong sense of collegiality amongst the staff and helped prevent inappropriate approaches from emerging amongst novice

lecturers. Thus the last recommendation from this study is that quality CPD provision should show higher levels of responsiveness towards lecturers' training needs.

### **7.8 Conclusion: the future of practice in further education colleges**

The shift away from the bureau-professional archetypal model of the FE college, as a collegiate institution, has been documented in this study by addressing the macro, meso and micro levels of the LSS. This study has found that practice at the micro level i.e. for lecturers, was complex and demanding. The marketised, post incorporation field for GFECs helped set the scene in forming the institutional context for negotiations that took place as lecturers figured out their practice methodologies. The institution's economies of performance have been revealed to be the products of senior managers' responses to external demands from macro level policy makers.

Given the institution specific arrangements in one case-study college, practitioners could potentially achieve flourishing in the practice dimensions of autonomy and knowledge. However, it appeared that practice was degraded in the dimension of responsibility, largely because of the calculative nature of the contemporary GFEC corporation. In order to address the potential for flourishing in the former two dimensions, managers in this college facilitated the tacit elements of practitioners' teaching. They were aware of and responded to their responsibilities towards facilitating lecturers' tacit understanding for creating mutually beneficial learning relationships with students. This chapter has made a range of recommendations concerning the development of generative resources in staff workrooms and the protection of time for lecturers to reflect on their work, as a means to create the appropriate environment in which lecturers may flourish in at least some dimensions of their work.

The final conclusion in this study addresses formal qualifications for novices. ITT forms the bedrock of the lecturer's wittingness and calibre. The ITT in two colleges did not help novices in understanding what they were encountering in their everyday classroom experiences. At worst, the ITT was in effect reduced to replicating a set of skills that novices seemed to be able to pick up without instruction whilst doing their job. It failed to provide them with the analytical knowledge that gave them theoretical insight and pedagogical explanation of why and how students learn.



Under the direction of the FE Workforce Reforms Initiative (2007), the Institute for Learning (IfL) requires that lecturers need to be qualified and licensed to practice. As the fieldwork for this thesis was carried out some months before the reforms came into effect, their direct impact on the quality and quantity of CPD and ITT for lecturers is as yet unknown. However, when asked, the HR managers in the three case-studies all anticipated that their college already had appropriate CPD in place through college wide staff development days and that their teacher training provision would be able to adapt seamlessly to provide the new teaching qualifications for novices. This raises questions about the quality of ITT provided under the Workforce Reforms agenda.

In this research it was seen that in colleges where the lecturers were dealt with as ‘learning professionals’ a very hollowed out and minimal approach to staff development was adopted. However it emerged that in one college, a far more enriched complex process of continuous staff development emerged where, for example, lecturers’ input for training events and programmes was implemented as far as was possible. What seems to be emerging is a widening division between novices who are trained and developed in capital rich colleges i.e. those ‘academically’ orientated institutions, and the basic training handed down in others i.e. those ‘vocationally’ orientated, capital poor institutions.

This study concludes that precautions should be taken to ensure that under the Workforce Reforms Initiative the ITT programmes that are developed are more rigorous, with regards to pedagogical training and avoid the hollowed out and simplistic in-house programmes that have been disseminated over recent years in many FE institutions. If the current arrangements are allowed to continue, novice lecturers, especially in vocationally orientated colleges with low bases of academic capital, will not be given the wherewithal to understand the goal of flourishing in a dynamic learning environment and instead will tend towards the docile ‘lesson deliverers’ that some of the more mechanistic discourses would appear to advocate. A consequence of this is to yet further degrade their practice and disadvantage them, with regards to the dimensions of autonomy, responsibility and knowledge. Moreover, this will reduce further the likelihood of flourishing by the students and staff in vocational colleges, as they try to engage in the journey towards successful and purposeful learning.

## **7.9 Limitations to the study**

The limitations of this study occur in relation to the fieldwork approach that was adopted to explore the narratives of individual practitioners and managers in the different colleges. This fieldwork was based on one pilot and three main case-study sites in which semi-structured interviews were carried out. It could be argued that one of the shortcomings of the study in concentrating on only three institutions was that it failed to elicit enough information to make informative observations. The resource implications of a small scale thesis such as this, entertains the possibility that the available time and the researcher's lack of prior experience have, to some extent, restricted the comprehensiveness of the study. Nevertheless, the researcher had to rely on the findings of the fieldwork and the concepts that were generated through the process of applying framework analysis in a grounded theory approach, regardless of this limitation.

Although the fieldwork procedures and analysis of the findings were carried out as rigorously as possible, the selection of the case-study sites could be considered as problematic because gaining access to a college, to some extent, was fortuitous or accidental and not random. It has to be acknowledged that a possibility exists that the three main case-studies were not appropriate sites from which to develop theme analysis and conclusions regarding the different degrees of 'hollowed out' practice. If these shortcomings were proved to be well founded, this would mar the validity of the discussions on the degradation of practice. Although rigorously explored case-studies provide strong evidence (Flyvbjerg 2006) and are not to be discounted, a practical way to address this underlying doubt could be to extend the research project to include a substantially larger number of sites. This would allow for more triangulation amongst the cases and increase confidence in the outcomes.

Certain suggestions can be put forward for related studies that could be carried out as a development of this current research. For this thesis approximately 45 respondents were interviewed comprising managers and teaching staff from a variety of academic and vocational programmes who possessed different experiences, in terms of years spent working in the FE sector. A study is proposed that focuses instead on interviewing lecturing staff according to their teaching programme and that selects only those teaching in vocational programme areas. The investigation could flesh out their work context and address the notion of practice with this type of practitioner. For the study the fieldwork would entail identifying

and carrying out interviews in FE college sites that do not deliver any 16-19 years programmes that are 'academic' (i.e. 'A' levels or IBs), because the aim is to gain an insight into the degradation of practice within the areas of FE provision that are very removed from the idea of 'learning for learning's sake' or the 'gold standard' of academic programmes. It is anticipated that the constructions that practitioners figure out, regarding the dimensions of autonomy responsibility and knowledge, may be considerably 'hollowed out' when there appears to be very little academic capital accruing to the college as an institution and also to the lecturers' teaching programmes. It has to be noted that vocational programmes are in general terms employment focussed, but as indicated in this thesis, even within the category 'vocational' there is a range of provision and thus differences regarding lecturers' practice may be observed across the vocational sphere.

One last proposal for a further study is made. Non-college providers of education and training are training companies that may be set up and run in direct competition with local GFECs. These training companies are commercial operations and have no history of belonging to the post 16 welfare state education sector. It may be argued that as government support for colleges is apparently dependent on ever more efficient and responsive deployment of funds and resources by managers, then eventually GFEC provision and hence college practitioners' places of work may eventually come to resemble these businesses. In these organisations an even more fiercely calculative regime than that found in most FE institutions would be anticipated, as forming the context for practitioners' work. An investigation into the notion of practice amongst training company teaching staff, with regards to their negotiations of practice in their workplaces, would provide an interesting study. The purpose of this would be to address the question of how practitioners reconcile their personal orientations within the setting of the commercial mission of a corporate training company and how these negotiations regarding practice differ to the observations made in the FE colleges, as researched for this thesis.

This researcher believes that these two proposals form a good basis for further investigation into the complex post compulsory education and training sector, which to date, has received far less attention than the other sectors of the education service. More resources and time dedicated to unravelling the working lives of practitioners will contribute to the understanding of this very important sector, which is tasked with addressing many significant social and economic issues, but remains the

‘Cinderella Service’ as a consequence of its function being substantially misunderstood.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1

**Table giving minimum levels of performance across areas of provision in England**

<b>Programme or qualification type</b>	<b>Minimum level of performance (success rate)</b>
FE long qualification level 1	55%
FE long qualification level 2	55%
FE long qualification level 3	55%
A levels	75%
FE long qualification level 4 or higher	55%
Fe short qualification (5-24 weeks –all levels)	62%
Apprenticeships (full framework)	45%
Advanced apprenticeships (full framework)	45%
Train to Gain	65%

Raising and assuring quality *in* Our Statement of Priorities:  
the LSC's priorities and key actions for 2008/09 to 2010/11  
November 2007 p29

### Appendix 2

**Table giving projected participation in learning among 16- to 18-year-olds in England between 2007/08 and 2010/11 (percentages)**

	<b>2007/08</b>	<b>2008/09</b>	<b>2009/10</b>	<b>2010/11</b>
Proportion participating at 16	89.1	90.1	92.7	93.9
Proportion participating at 17	79.0	80.0	82.8	85.8
Proportion participating at 18	52.7	53.0	54.5	56.7
Proportion participating at 16-18	73.6	74.2	76.2	78.3

Increasing participation and achievement *in* Our Statement of Priorities:  
the LSC's priorities and key actions for 2008/09 to 2010/11  
November 2007 p35

## **Appendix 3      Example of an ICT agreement**

The terms and conditions for staff using technology in their teaching  
(in college A)

### **POLICY STATEMENT - COLLEGE ILT POLICY (Teaching and Learning)**

#### **College ILT Vision Statement**

The College recognises the growing potential and value of ILT to teaching and learning, in terms of enabling lecturers to use, produce and adapt engaging and pedagogically effective e-learning materials and make them easily accessible to learners, both on and off campus.

The College envisages using ILT, whenever possible, to widen participation and enrich the student learning experience. Although The College believes that our learners' predominant mode of engagement with their programme will be face-to-face contact with their tutor and lecturer for the foreseeable future, it will seek to empower learners, outside of the constraints of fixed modes of attendance, by creating access to video on demand master classes, podcast materials and to byte-sized chunks of e-learning content, anytime, anywhere. The College will require course teams to incrementally set higher targets for the use of ILT to support learning in each programme in the following areas:

- as a reinforcement of work covered in class,
- as an introduction to new skills, knowledge and learning
- as supplementary research
- as a revision aid, and
- as a means to work collaboratively online using tools such as Wikis and blogs.

College ILT Champions, Practitioners and Librarians will work with course teams in mapping e-learning materials to individual course modules/units on an ongoing basis to help lecturers with the integration of ILT into their learning programmes.

Given the current and anticipated future rate of technological development in IT infrastructure and systems, as well as content, it is inevitable that The College will deliver and assess an increasing proportion of learning online over the next five years. Communication between tutors and students and between student peers, by e-mail, computer conferencing or video conferencing will increasingly become the norm in College.

The College will also actively explore further opportunities to:

- design and deliver online assessment of appropriate elements of student learning programmes, subject to rigorous security measures and to the requirements of validating and awarding bodies
- pilot the introduction of electronic skills portfolios.

The College also acknowledges its obligation to develop lecturers' IT and ILT skills and to invest in high speed networks, presentation tools, modern specification workstations, technologies and other learning devices to enable our staff to embed e-learning and blended learning into our curriculum.

(See also comprehensive Vision Statement in "The Digital College" Strategy document, June 2006 Update.)

## Appendix 3 con't

### Policy Statements

#### 1. Use of electronic resources and systems

**1.1 Each permanently contracted member of academic staff will be required to integrate** the following e-learning materials into the learning programmes that they teach:

- a) quality assured e-resources supplied by DfES, BECTa and other central agencies as well as locally produced learning objects
- b) their own selection of e-learning resources from the following menu of supplementary materials:
  - exemplar materials produced by individual lecturers throughout the sector which have been deposited in the FERL website's Teaching and Learning resource bank, the JORUM repository and include
  - commercially available materials;
  - their own interactive materials which they have produced using a variety of software tools
  - useful websites generally.

*It is acknowledged that the rate of progress made by each member of staff will be dependent on The College's ability to allocate a laptop or PC to them.*

#### 1.2 The ILT Development Centre will help Academy Management Teams by:

- monitoring the progress of their staff in making effective use of ILT resources, VLE and other IT systems and in undertaking and successfully completing prerequisite ILT skills training and updating
- facilitating the sharing of good ILT practice within their Academy by identifying lecturers who possess high level ILT skills as well as sound pedagogical skills, knowledge and understanding, as reflected in good-to-excellent lesson observation grades
- obtaining details from their teams of how they intend to use e-learning resources within Schemes of Work, Lesson Plans and assignments
- negotiating ILT development targets with the staff for whom they are responsible on an annual basis, during appraisal interviews
- tabling regular reports which specify the progress made by course teams in Academies in implementing Action Plans negotiated during the last round of ILT Staff Development Programmes
- collaborating with Quality and Standards to ensure that each Academy appoints its own ILT Co-ordinator who will oversee the implementation of ILT targets within their home Academy and support the teaching staff tasked with embedding ILT within their courses.

**1.3 ILT Champions and Co-ordinators will be seconded to DST** as required in order to advise team members whether criteria outlined in CIF and OFSTED Inspectors' Handbook are being successfully implemented during lesson observations.

**1.4 The College will pilot the production of electronic skills portfolios** in a number of curriculum areas during the next three years, prior to more extensive adoption of this initiative throughout The College.

#### 2. Training and Support for Academic Staff

**2.1 The ILT Development Centre will train our workforce in how to make effective use of elearning and emerging technologies and embed them within our curriculum delivery, consistent with national strategy, policy and practice and our own corporate needs.** The College will seek to create a culture which facilitates the sharing of higher level application

of ILT by experienced lecturers who possess sound subject knowledge and understanding and excellent pedagogical skills.

- 2.2 Professional librarians will liaise with academic staff to help them identify appropriate resources to support student assignments and physically embed high quality electronic resources within VLE course folders.
- 2.3 Professional librarians will work with ILT Co-ordinators and individual academic staff in planning inputs to VLE induction and user education programmes, and drafting assignments which require access to electronic resources within the VLE.
- 2.4 The Media and IT Section will negotiate, implement, review and then update SLAs with Teaching Centres/Academies with a view to offering a more responsive service to academic staff, students and other College customers. Help Desk software will generate key performance indicators and statistical reporting which will feed into SLA monitoring and re-negotiation processes.

### **3. Procurement and Production of E-resources**

- 3.1 Library and Information staff and academic staff will jointly build upon the progress made to date in purchasing e-resource collections from JISC, EduServ and other suppliers, in order to provide a comprehensive portfolio of resources hosted by College LRCs.
- 3.2 College LRCs will incrementally increase the proportion of its non-staffing revenue budget allocated to e-books and electronic databases.
- 3.3 The College will build upon its current market leader position in the production of elearning materials by expanding the remit and function of the ILT Development Centre to include the development, packaging and sale of learning objects, master classes and other online learning materials.

### **4. Investment in IT equipment and systems**

- 4.1 CITG and CSG will systematically review the distribution of student and staff workstations among Academies and across sites in order to ensure an equitable distribution of equipment among Academies.
- 4.2 By 2008, The College will gradually increase the proportion of its gross annual turnover spent on additional/replacement staff and student workstations, electronic classrooms (including mobile technologies), assistive technologies and software, consistent with sectoral recommendations and benchmarks. The College will seek a return on this investment by incrementally increasing the proportion of GLH delivered via e/blended learning.
- 4.3 The College will expand its IT provision (including PCs, electronic presentation tools, video conferencing) in classrooms, LRCs and hot spot wireless enabled open plan

Policy Ref./Version No. C010/V4



## Appendix 4.1

### Interview Schedules

#### (a) Interview with an Experienced Lecturer

##### Preamble

How long have you been in FE?

*18 years. I came in September 1988, so this is my 19<sup>th</sup> year.*

What did you do before?

*I worked in X for 9 years, which didn't work out. I didn't pass all my exams. So, I decided on a change of career and did an education degree, with a view to teaching in school and ended up teaching in FE.*

With your nearly 20 years of experience, I'd like to talk about work in this FE college.

### Interview questions

#### ***Part 1: Work-time and tasks / work content and quality***

a. There are many initiatives going on in colleges at the moment - integrating 'learning styles' into lesson plans, classroom observations, basic skills mapping to lessons, less delivery time per module etc. Concerning responsibilities given to you, do you feel that more or fewer demands are being made?

*Definitely much more. In terms of like less time for teaching. So, there's more groups for less time, there's more demands on paperwork and a lot of it is paperwork. A lot of admin, funding issues, observation issues, new initiatives, requirement to be in college, more time pressure, general pressure of the job, students not always being equipped for learning when they come to the college. Definitely, much more pressure.*

i. Can you give me an example of what this means for your everyday work routine?

*It just means I have to put more hours into the job and I get much more tired and the students suffer and I suffer. You don't get as much time to relax and you don't do your job as well.*

ii. Can you tell me how changes came about?

*Tends to be imposed. I mean we did have for a time, what was s'posed to be a team working culture in the college, which worked reasonably successfully, but then the ethos of the college had moved away from a team working structure to a ...quite a heavy management structure, to a deep management structure. So, that impacted and*

*also government funding and inspection requirements, which the college has to comply with or would appear to have to comply with.*

b. Looking back over the last year, what changes in levels of work intensity you have experienced in your role as a lecturer. (Note any matters or incidents eg curriculum issues, inspection, college merger, new staff/ management that affected the year).

*Over the last 12 months? I would say very pressured from last autumn up until about Easter and then after that sort of medium pressure until the summer, then heavy pressure from this September onwards. There's certain individual circumstances that have contributed to the pressure term, but it's certainly there.*

i. Is there any particular reason why the beginning of the year tends to be so pressured?

*Just because things just don't seem to be very well organised. There doesn't seem to be much true communication now. There's a lot of emails flying around and a lot of instructions, but not much chance to actually talk to people and arrange things so the right things are.....clear. I mean I have additional responsibility.....I do have co-ordinator responsibilities, so they have ...are particularly heavy at the start of term, but I wouldn't say...I would say that the people who have co-ordinator responsibilities, the pressure is high.*

c. In future, say in two years' time, how do you expect workload to change? (i.e. Ease off/ get more pressured?) Can you explain the reason behind this?

*I don't think it's going to get any easier in my own case, because I have a disability, I have a support worker who allays things over this year, but that's not generally available. I think it becomes a very divided college, in that some lecturers have a very much greater workload than others. I think traditionally, the more academic subjects or the more academic students or the more advanced level students, were considered the more demanding, but it's actually the less academic, the more demanding the students. So, the staff dealing with the least academic are the most pressured.*

## **Part 2: College organisation/training and learning**

a. Compared with your early days in FE, what work issue causes you most concern now?

*Just sheer pressure on time. When I started at the college, there was a requirement to teach less hours. There was more breaks given. Time-tables were more balanced. Student groups were often smaller. It's difficult to put it down to one thing. Just the sheer pressure of time, plus the demand...plus the admin, which has increased many fold. When I started at the college, the college was under local authority control. Now wasn't a panacea by any means. In its own way that could be quite bureaucratic, but it meant that when the college became independent a lot of the bureaucracy came over to the college. A little empire rose, which was intended to take the administration burden away, but actually ended up moving the admin burden over on to...well until a few years ago the support staff and the college itself over the last couple of years has made the decision to cut down on the number of support staff. So,*

*now the burden of admin is falling on the lecturers. There are actually very few support staff.*

i. Have you suggested how the issue should be tackled?

*Yes.*

ii. Did it turn out to your satisfaction?

*My line manager is not very interested in that and seems very pressured herself in the job and has just resigned herself for the third time.*

b. With many years of experience as a lecturer, can you comment on any factors currently affecting your own style of work?

i. For 'formal' and in 'informal' settings with students? (Eg lecture/ lesson contrasted with 1-1).

*In the past there was an opportunity to do a balance of teaching and individual 1:1s or small group work, because of the pressure of time and the introduction of ILT, the students are more given the work, which should give more opportunity for more 1:1s, but in fact because the students still need a significant amount of individual in put, the time available for 1:1s is less and also you were able to see students outside lessons and have the time to them, but because of the burden of admin and meetings and sheer fatigue, it limits the opportunities to see the students.*

ii. Can you comment on any factors currently affecting your own style of work with colleagues? (Eg meeting contrasted with staff workroom)

*I think the atmosphere is less friendly, almost, less relaxed, because everybody's under the pressure of work. There's not the opportunity to network in the same way. Time set aside for inset, within the working week and for team meetings and learning. That's just been eroding and you're expected to do subject learning and new initiative learning in your own time. There isn't the opportunity to learn organically and share ideas, even though that's one of the planks of learning. Things that were dealt with through staff discussing and coming to a best solution on issues like differentiation, which obviously is an important initiative, becomes now an initiative, rather than something that was dealt with organically through the course teams.*

iii. Please describe how much say you feel you have for developing a style in the classroom?

*Probably still have a degree of freedom, because in the end although they might set down objectives for use of ILT and ways that lessons might be structured. In the end, you know what works for you and it is a profession where if people having different learning styles and I can think of a lecturer who teaches in parallel to me and teaches in a completely different style. I think you judge yourself by results, as far as possible and probably that's still something that's important.*

c. Can you give an example of learning as a group of lecturers / staff that occurred last year? Can you describe how this group 'eureka' moment came about?

*I'm not sure there has been a eureka moment. I think success in adapting to new technology and adapting learning style where it has been effective. So, like the*

*college has a virtual learning environment which is a mixed blessing. It has its benefits. I think use of the internet...I teach \_\_\_\_\_ which traditionally there wasn't much resources available. It wasn't a fun subject. Internet resourcing tended to be towards the hands on subjects. That does seem to be changing. The opportunity to use the resource, the internet is just getting a home computer.*

d. Please give an example of feedback that you received last year? From:

i) managers (When and in what ways was this constructive or not constructive?)

*I did receive a formal appraisal. Obviously the appraisal isn't something you look forward to, because you consider it might become a performance related issue. It didn't become a performance related issue, but on the other hand it became a rather formal exercise. Little came out of it [appraisal] that was beneficial or beneficial to the college. It's difficult to think of positive feedback from line management. Perhaps not from my immediate line manager, perhaps from the deputy. Support on a student complaint or what would have been a student complaint was felt positive.*

ii) from colleagues/lecturers (When and in what ways was this constructive or not constructive?)

*I think that's always very important. It's not likely that....because of staffroom banter you don't say that was wonderful. You don't actually see your staffroom colleagues very often, but I think it's implied really. I think if you don't hear anything it's ...you know you're doing OK. It's a bit like being a football referee, no news is good news. The fact that you are appreciated by your colleagues. If you're not doing your job you can get ostracised by your colleagues. I know that in a covert way you become less popular, because there is still that quality ethos within us. I think that the college doesn't recognise that most lecturers do do a very good job. And want to do a very good job.*

iii. What about yourself? (When and in what ways was this constructive or not constructive?)

*On the effectiveness of teaching? On the effectiveness of learning?*

On something to do with work, maybe your effectiveness in the classroom?.

*I feel good and bad reflection. Obviously, good reflection in my co-ordinator role. I took the trouble to get to know most of the group before they started, that I co-ordinate. So, I feel that they're on track  
Hopefully retention and achievement would be good. On a negative point of view, obviously you're worried about whether it impacting on your teaching. You get stress in addition to normal stresses.*

e. How much contact do you have with your line manager these days to help or advise you on day to day matters?

*My line manager doesn't tend to advise, more to issue items that need attention. It tends to be either can you do this by Tuesday or I'll leave that in your fair hands. I don't*

*look to my line manager for support really although I wouldn't say she was unsupportive, but it's not where I look for support. The fact that although she's my line manager, she hasn't got the commonality of subject, might impact on that as well.*

i.Can you describe this contact? (regular scheduled supervision/ held in private /casual arrangement/ informal / 5 minutes in staff workroom every now and then/ over lunch in canteen)

*It's a mixture. There are meetings called and I see her individually in passing in the college several times a week and more formally every couple of weeks or so. It's in a variety of settings, some within course team, some within larger group meetings and because there is a heavy management structure at the moment then I see different managers at different times in different situations.*

ii.How satisfactory is this/ Does this meet your needs?

*I don't think so. I think that if you've got a deep management structure then you've got to, to need a level of responsibility assigned to each level and the responsibilities are not clear, as to who has the responsibility for what and there's a lot of passing the buck goes on. Perhaps among the lecturers as well as among the managers.*

f.Do you feel able to raise honestly, and without prejudice, concerns about your work with your line manager?

i.Please give an example of this from last year.

*No, but it's not something I've never found very easy. I don't think ....with any management structure even if it's open or shallow, do you feel protected about your own work. You probably...they feel lecturers don't need to be protected about their own work. Particularly with a more hierarchical structure you feel the pressure. I think with a shallow structure then you do have more opportunity. In the academy in which I'm working there's been significant changes in the management. In a lot of the other academies the promotion was from within. In mine it was from without. So, it hasn't worked as well I don't think.*

ii.How supported do you feel when you have a concern to resolve?

*I wouldn't take it directly to my line manager. I would take it to a line manager, probably to the deputy within the academy. I wouldn't feel confidence in HR, because they don't have a person who is approachable. The idea of HR, where they're able to offer unbiased and friendly advice, unfortunately seems to have gone. I think I would raise the issues with peers or outside the college.*

g.How do work relationships compare with when you came into the sector? (eg more/less supportive, collegiate, personal).

i.with peers

*Definitely poorer, but I think you can always hark back to a golden age when...and always think relationships were better than they were. You really don't know how a lot of people see you, ....it depends on the individual personality like any job. There*

*are a great deal of different personalities, probably people who overvalue themselves and people who undervalue themselves. It's probably good that that situation exists.*

- ii. with managers and
- iii. senior managers?

*Personally I get on fine with SMT. I've had the opportunity to talk to them in contexts, through academic board etc. I think most staff are well respected and can talk to SM. It's too easy to give the 'them and us' philosophy. I think there are very few people in the college whose heart isn't in the right place. It's just that perhaps the training is not there to enable them to get the message across or they're under considerable pressure themselves.*

- iv. Is this different today from what it used to be?

*Yes, I think the pressures are much greater at every level in the college. There's the pressure to perform well, but to be seen to perform well and also there's a kind of notion of performing well, based upon statistical measures which probably doesn't measure up. They've tried to measure value added, to address how well the college is performing, but I think you know yourself how well the college is performing and I think you know how well your students are performing, but it's often difficult to get that across. The last inspection...the inspectors were more positive and more welcoming and seemed to adopt a different ethos which, was more positive in some ways than the college ethos.*

### ***Part 3: What it means to be a lecturer***

- a. When you look back over the last year, identify one highlight for you and one low point. Please tell me something about each one.

*I think the highlights tend to come at the end of the year when you see the success of the students. The students who I personally co-ordinate, when they....leaving and they thank you for it. I think thanks is something that people find difficult. I think what is rewarding is where you are given students in a subject in a subject which is not your forte. For instance last year I had to teach key skills to 16 year old beauty therapy students. That wasn't my forte by any means. They were not interested and somebody could have done that job better. That never became a rewarding task, because the goal's never met as it were.*

- i. Could you give me examples of daily routines that give most satisfaction and,
- ii. least satisfaction?

*The most rewarding is operating with a group of students. Where students give you positive feedback and you feel you have..... The least rewarding is obviously where the students are not equipped or willing to learn or where you feel you've given a bad lesson. There are times when you teach better than others and if you do give a poor lesson, you know it, the students know it and it's an unpleasant experience.*

iii. How have these changed over your (20) years of working in FE?

*I think it's harder to give a good lesson nowadays. Circumstances change, you get older. I wouldn't like to say that it's all been negative. I think it's difficult to judge because the students are different. I would say they were necessarily better, but they were more equipped with the tools to come into FE. The basic study skills and willingness to conform has gone. The students we have got now are still intelligent and still interested, but not as geared to the FE set up and I don't think that the changes that are being made to try and address that, do address it in terms...they tend to be more finance driven. So, the use of ILT should be to benefit the students and give them more opportunity to learn independently, but because there isn't the facility to do that...the college is only open certain hours and the restrictions to IT. There's not enough access to IT and there isn't the opportunity within their time-table to do that. If they're in a IT room they're maybe having an IT lesson. They haven't really found the right balance for the students. Perhaps education itself is something that's been messed around so much that I don't think parents and students have as much faith in it themselves.*

b. If a job opportunity arose, would you happily recommend friends to come to lecture at a FE college?

(E.g. How would you advise them? / What experiences make you say this?)

*I would have quite a long conversation with them I think. I wouldn't say no don't, because I know a lot of lecturers have left the profession for other jobs, they come back and say that was the best thing I ever did, but obviously you're less likely to hear from the people who didn't make a success of it. Perhaps some are not equipped for lecturing. Generally I would still say go for it if that's what you want to do. I wouldn't put anybody off being a lecturer, but I would warn them that it is a very demanding job. Not a very rewarding job and to think about what effect it might have on their personal and social life. Teaching can be a rewarding job. I think it would depend on the personality of the person and the subject level.*

c. Are there opportunities available in college lecturing that meet your future plans?

Would you see yourself working in lecturing in:

i) 2 years time      yes / no

ii) 5 years time    yes / no?

*Certainly in 2 years time and I'd like to think in 5 years time. There are considerations in my case and the.... obviously there are financial considerations as well and the pension situation. I would think so but, I know it is a very individual thing. I know a lot of lecturers have left the profession in the last few years and that trend will probably continue, probably an increase in the move towards part-time work. Quite a number of colleagues have half-time. Where they can cope with that financially then that's probably quite a good thing from a personal point of view.*

d. Finally, I am trying to get an image of professionalism for college lecturers.

i. Please give me your definition of a professional lecturer.

*I think a professional lecturer will be one that puts the students at the heart of the process, one who is concerned for their individual success and achievement and well*

*being and happiness during their time at college. I still think there's a place for general education. I think somebody who sees a student 2 years later at the college and sees that that student's coming out with more than they came with. I think that person is a professional lecturer. They do a professional job in terms of what is required of her or him. That's the core of it.*

ii. Is this different from what you considered to be a professional lecturer when you entered FE? (In what ways?)

*Not really, it's just that it's easier to measure. It was easier to measure whether that success had been achieved. I think it was more feedback from the students, more feedback from the college, less judgment on statistical results. It's like making a profit in business. You know whether you've made a profit, it's just how big that profit is. I think it's harder to judge now how far the students have travelled.*

iii. What do you consider is the most important factor for someone becoming a professional?

*I think a lot of it is very personal. This is where my concerns are about the use of ILT. There's still students?????for within the college environment...a personal enjoyment from being with peers and being in a social setting and obviously that's important and that's where colleges prosper.*

iv. Please describe how you think someone achieves this state or how someone does not make the grade?

*Willingness to work hard and ability to take an interest...achieve a reasonable work life balance. If someone's not able to achieve a positive enough life balance, then they won't achieve a positive work balance. I think there's got to be a time for relaxation and reflection and it's ...probably a good attitude of someone coming into the profession would be the ability to say no. That's not reasonable or I would like to do that in my own way. The tendency is to be very prescriptive nowadays in the way that the subject's approached. I think there's perhaps been an over emphasis on getting people into the classroom without teaching qualifications. Without the ability to get the subject across and perhaps that's true in education generally nowadays. Being your own person would be important and having a bit of character.*

How did you learn to be a lecturer?

*That's a difficult one, because...I did do a degree in education, I did a lot of teaching practice, some more successful than others. Actually I don't think I really learnt until about 3 years into the job. It took about 3 years in FE before I actually felt confident in being able to get the message across.*

How did that happen?

*I think it just happens gradually. I think you just get more and more confident in your own ability. You wouldn't want to talk for an hour, but I think I could now talk for an hour if I was substituting for somebody else, I could probably waffle...keep students' interest. Just knowing how to communicate is very important. It is acting and to put the ... ..learning how to act so that you get the message across and I don't think*



*that's something you can teach. I think a lot of people can't do it. Perhaps I surprised myself that I can actually do it. We've had supply teachers in the college who haven't been able to do it. I think I've learnt on the job as it were. I don't think you can teach how to teach. Perhaps you can try, you can craft somebody, but I think you have to have a basic ability, obviously some teachers are better at teaching than others. Some are better at the subject and some are better at getting the message across. Obviously it's good to have a balance and it's good for the students to have a balance. I wouldn't denigrate teacher training, I think teacher training is very important, but from the students to talk to their peers and learn through their.....through what works through discussion and also mastering the range of tools available. I mean in many ways my teaching is a lot better than it was 18 years ago, certainly the standard of handout. The sort of things I was giving out as handouts 20 years ago, I'd throw into the bin. The tools are there today, so there's no reason why it can't be better than it was 18 years ago. I think that's the situation where you pump prime somebody and think they're alright for the next 20-30 years. You wouldn't expect that in any other profession. People should have secondments and placements. They should have more training and education....thematic point of view. It doesn't help that some government training is very poor. I went on a training course on differentiation and it was appalling. They didn't have a grasp on what a college setting was.*

e. Before you joined the staff, you were a \_\_\_\_\_ (for example, engineer, nurse, nursery nurse).

These days do you consider yourself a lecturer or \_\_\_\_\_? (What is your reasoning for this?)

*I think you do need the subject knowledge. I think you can go in to education, particularly now in FE it's changing, where there is going to be a requirement that everybody is teacher trained. I think you need a balance, you always need to be one step ahead. I would say in FE now you are often required to teach a range of subjects and a range of abilities in a way that you are prepared for. I don't know how teacher trainers look it nowadays, certainly in my day they hadn't really a feel for the job.*

So are you \_\_\_\_\_ or a lecturer?

*I'm a teacher. I don't think the name lecturer is particularly helpful.*

*I would call myself \_\_\_\_\_ in situations where I wanted to impress someone.*

*I am \_\_\_\_\_ in that anybody can call themselves a \_\_\_\_\_. I am in that I have skills. I don't think that's important, I think I'm a teacher foremost. I happen to teach related subjects. Given a different background, I could teach different subjects, probably equally soundly. \_\_\_\_\_ is actually a language.....there's a tendency to stereotype subjects which I think is unfortunate. If you put a group of lecturers together and said, who's the X teacher, who's the Y.....they probably have reasonable success in picking them out. Unfortunately more people go into teaching than there are shortage subjects and that creates its own divisions. Being in a shortage subject isn't necessarily a panacea, it means your opportunities for progression or moving are restricted.*

Thank you for your time and comments.

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## **(B) Interview with a Manager**

### **Preamble**

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed.

I would like to talk about your role as Staff Development Manager for the college.

### **Interview questions**

#### ***Part 1: College organisation/training and learning for lecturers***

##### ***Formal learning opportunities***

a) On a scale of 1 (actively against) to 5 (enthusiastic and value the opportunity) How would you rate lecturers' attitude towards staff development days /weeks on the annual college calendar?

i. What comments have been fed back?

*That varies a lot on who you speak to. The average member of support staff rate them quite highly. The support staff feel there's much more going for them on development days. Whereas lecturers would probably rate them very differently, day to day. We do vary the courses we offer on staff development days quite dramatically and think you'll find that some days a lecturer will say, "oh that wasn't very useful. I feel that I didn't attend any courses that were worthwhile". On different day they'll say, "that was the best day ever". On the whole, you'll find that members of support staff, whereas lecturing staff vary in their assessment. The problem with lecturing staff is, their requirements are so varied from person to person and department to department, that it's very hard to offer them the courses they need on the days. A good number of them will get more valuable training outside of development. They take a day off, here and there, if they go to a training course somewhere and that's probably much more valuable for them. On Staff Development Days we target certain things. This year we've been targeting disability awareness and that's been quite successful, but you will find some staff who don't feel that's relevant to them. When we had a woman come to talk about Aspergers Syndrome in November, the feedback from lecturers was extremely positive. There were still a couple who said it was a waste of their time. A lot of lecturers have worked in other colleges and they realise that here, we've got a good position financially and the courses we offer we try to get staff involved. We try and run the courses that they ask for. On the whole, they would look at it and be very impressed.*

ii. What sort of budget do you have to invite people and having special event days?

*It's quite substantial. We spend about £X00,000 on staff development, including staff pay. That's not just the actual trainers we bring in, that's allowing for the fact that*

*staff are being paid to turn up that day. That budget also allows for staff to go on training courses externally. On training days, the principal will give a briefing, SMT will give a briefing.... We get forms that come through, applications to attend a conference or course.*

iii. When staff go on such a course and they come back to college, is there an obligation that they cascade?

*There is, yes. They fill out a report form when they return on how they thought the event was, because if they said the event was awful, then we won't send anybody else on that course. If they said it was really good, then we think maybe we should invite that person to come and do a talk in the college. In the form, they are supposed to state who they are going to feed back this information to. It happens, very informally it happens. It's not organised.... well sometimes we do organise a course for that person on a Staff Development Day. I've been trying to avoid formalising too many things, because informally it works so well. The minute you ask for too much paperwork and too much proof of this and that, things don't happen so much.*

b) On a scale of 1 (actively against) to 5 (enthusiastic and value the opportunity)  
How would you rate the attitude of trainee lecturers to teacher training programmes?  
i. What comments have been fed back?

*That would be quite varied from module to module. Generally the feedback we get from the PGCE is quite positive. Which is quite unusual, because talking to colleagues in other colleges, the feedback is they don't really enjoy it. They feel it could be more practical. But here, I do make a point of talking to new lecturers, they do actually quite enjoy it. They'll say, "module 2.... I've had a boring module, it wasn't very exciting". Others will say that another module was really good and they learnt about elearning, or the role of the tutor.*

c) On a scale of 1 (actively against) to 5 (enthusiastic and value the opportunity)  
How would you rate lecturers' attitude towards your induction programme?  
i. What comments have been fed back?

*Again, its quite varied, but generally very good. We're meeting soon to review the induction, as we do every year. We invite all the new staff with their mentors, to come along and discuss there induction process and how they felt they settled in. They fill out an induction checklist to ensure everything has been gone through. The comments I get are usually really, really, positive.*

Do the mentors get paid?

*No, they don't. They tend to be DHTTs and it's really part of their job role. So there's no actual pay for it. In some circumstances they're given extra remission, but generally they do it of their own backs really. We don't get any complaints, the people we choose to be mentors actually volunteer, they quite enjoy doing it.*

d) What opportunities exist for organised feedback for lecturers on their work from:  
i. Line managers, ii. Colleagues/peers/lecturers, iii. Self?

*There's not much in the way of formal procedures in place. With appraisal we actually have lesson observations as well. What would happen with someone like myself, I would probably have someone like X as my HTT come in and observe my lesson and then he would feedback to me. Regarding colleague to colleague they're quite able to, if they want to, to organise a colleague to come and observe a lesson. I did that when I first joined the college, actually. There's nothing formal in place for that, nobody's expected to do it.*

Does feedback happen at team meetings?

*I used to chair the X team meetings and you will discuss what everyone's doing. That is a good opportunity where, two lecturers teaching the same unit will formally sit down and discuss things, but you do tend to find that these MOS share the same workroom i.e. all the computing lecturers are in the same workroom. So, colleagues discussing progress etc, is more of an informal process. We also do a verification, so with my marking, for example, it would get checked by somebody else. X might look at my work and say, "I think you've been a bit generous here or a bit mean there". So, we sit down and discuss this. That's actually a formal one, because you do fill out paperwork.*

### **Informal learning opportunities**

f) How would you describe the informal (ie. not necessarily scheduled) opportunities that benefit lecturers in their learning at work in this college?

*I would say, with regards to staff development, informal is probably the largest part of it and we do recognise that. Every year we produce a report for the governors and I always make a point of saying that probably our biggest strength in staff development, is probably our staff, because they are willing to help each other informally. People will knock on each other's door and say can you help me with this? Before now, I've actually been in an A level class and I popped to see my colleague to say "can you come in here and help me with that". The general atmosphere in the college is very supportive. The governors recognise that as well.*

i. How does the college system support these sorts of opportunities? E.g. how does that ethos (of people helping/not helping each other) get established?

*It has been about since before I joined the college. I think its set from the top. I think the principal is very keen on setting a positive work atmosphere. Staff are paid well in the college. There's quite lot of money in staff development. There is a training bonus available to staff, where if they train for a year, they receive a bonus. All these things make staff think, "well they do look after us here". "If the college looks after me, I really want to look after the college". You do feel obliged to help other MOS. When I joined the college, the amount of support I got, I feel that is my job to give that back to other MOS. So, it's management that has established this.*

ii. Do you have as much time as you would like, to be able to help each other?

*No, definitely not. I think it boils down to the fact, that at the end of the day, the college is a business and it has to make money. If every MOS was given an hour off to do more training then it would increase costs and we would have to make more money else where. We do have time build into the time-table, we do have frees, but generally that's taken up with preparation. So staff supporting each other, may do that in their own time. Maybe staying a bit later. Staff will say that they finish at 4.15pm, but they usually stay here until 5 or 6pm. On a Wednesday afternoon most people aren't time-tabled and that time will be used to support each other, but there's definitely room for more time.*

## ***Part 2: lecturers' work- time and tasks / work content and quality***

a) There are many initiatives going on in colleges at the moment regarding what lecturers have to do- e.g. integrating 'learning styles' into lesson plans, more frequent classroom observations, basic skills mapping to lessons.

Concerning responsibilities given to lecturers, do you feel that gradually

i) more or

ii) fewer demands are being made of lecturers?

*There are more demands, but with learning styles now, we've got subject learning coaches now and there was a standards unit set up, where lecturers and different departments go on different training courses to get new ideas of how to teach more difficult things. I went to an event and a colleague of mine went to an event, teaching relational databases, which is one of those really difficult things. They gave a pack of clever tips and resources to use and that's something that's fed back and shared with everybody. I am looking at organising an event where we'll try to get the subject learning coaches together, where they can give a generic approach of different teaching methods. They were calling it, "Making Theory Lessons more interesting".*

Differentiated learning is behind the learning styles agenda?

*Yes, to make sure your more able students are using their skills and the less able students don't feel they are less able.*

b) During my research interviews across several colleges lecturers have often told me they have too much work to do.

i. Do you think that lecturers are being given more or fewer tasks or responsibilities?

*I would say more. I might even say, significantly more. I think a lot is expected of lecturers. They're expected to come up with SOW. They're expected to interact with other lecturers with regards to SOW, check each others progress, help each other out. Make sure they keep they're own training up to date, attend training courses. So, I would they're definitely getting more responsibilities and they're getting more and more all the time. In this college, they all cope with it very, very well, but there definitely is a strain on lecturers. It's a hard job.*

ii. Lecturers in the colleges I'm looking at, often tell me they have too much to do, what would your opinion be?

*I would agree, but I would say it's true in any role in this college. Everyone has too much to do. Because they're dedicated, rather than actually complaining about it, they'll get on with it. They've proved that they can do it, it can be done in the time they're given, but they do work very hard.*

iii. Where do they get the time it takes to get it all done? How do they get more out of the working day?

*I think really, by working very efficiently. Some MOS will get here at 8am in the morning, so they give themselves an extra hour there. They'll stay until 5.15pm, that gives them another hour. On the Wednesday afternoon they'll find the time there. So, there is time available but they don't sit round relaxing drinking tea. They use their time efficiently and they need to. Colleges are competitive now and we need to be working that much better to ensure we stay at the top.*

You did make a comment earlier that sometimes some lecturers overwork. Have you thought about that more, since we last spoke?

*Yes, I have actually. Some lecturers do overwork, they do work too hard and as a result they get themselves stressed out. We have been looking at stress relief courses and time management courses. Just to steer lecturers, "you're working very well, but you may be trying too hard now. Make sure you get your balance between your personal life and your work life". I think stress management is the most important in that. We've got a number of courses running on this throughout this year.*

iv. Do you think managers are going to ever be at the point of turning round to a lecturer and saying "you've done enough on that, you don't need to do more"?

*I think they do already. You get some DHTT or other manager will turn to a MOS and say, "what you've done is fine.....don't worry about it...you're being overly critical of your own work now". Lesson observation is a good example of that, staff get themselves very worked up. They're very self critical and they like to prove that they're doing the job to the very best of their ability. They tend to worry far too much about the observation. Sometimes a DHTT will say, "you've over prepared that lesson".*

c) Can you give me some (one) example(s) of initiative(s) related to lecturers' work that your department is involved in?  
e.g. key skills, have you had much to do with them?

*No, I haven't actually. My role in Key Skills has been very limited. My only real involvement is in making sure that Key Skills assessors are trained.*

### ***Part 3: What managers think being a lecturer means***

a)How do you handle lecturers who fail to deliver?

*This usually comes from the HTT. There'll be part of a meeting where you'd get a print off of your students predicted grades and the actual grades. We score the lesson, people who achieve below the grade is minus one and so on. So, you can score your class at the end of the year and look at why the discrepancies between subjects. That highlights who the DHTT or HTT might want to talk to.*

i.How do staff react to this?(Do they feel as though they're being checked up on?)

*Sometimes, I think staff look at stats in front of them and say they're just stats, but I think it's important to note that all the stats are human beings ie students. Most staff receive it quite well. I think staff were scared at first that the whole value added thing would be a way of judging them and it's really a way to let them measure themselves.*

I would be a bit worried that there's some degree of pushing the responsibility down the line to the lecturer.

*I think that would depend on the department's manager, but generally here, the management are good at taking responsibility for the actions of lecturers and understanding that not everything is the lecturers fault. If something goes wrong, they don't blame the lecturer. They'll actually look at a way to improve things. There was a big change in the Maths department over the last couple of years, they changed the whole SOW and it was the HTT that did that, because the results were good, but I think they wanted to bring the value added up. They didn't blame any MOS. The staff thought it was a bit too much in one go, but actually worked really well and they're positive about it now. I can't think of a single lecturer that got in trouble for their results. It doesn't work that way*

*We're looking for some one who's keen, enthusiastic. What you've got to remember is, education is always changing, there's always new initiatives. If you get lecturers who stick with the old methods and say, "I've taught this way for 20 years and this is how I'm going to stick with it". Then you find as education changes, they don't. So, you need people who want to take on board new things and try new things. There's new courses coming out all the time and it's quite easy to say, "the old one works so why a new one".*

iii. I want to look at the situation of a lecturer saying, "no". For example, Learning styles creates quite a lot of difficulty, in that people say, "learning styles is only the latest fad." If somebody says "no", how is that dealt with?

*That's a good question. I don't like to tell people to do things, I like to ask them. If I had something that I thought was a very good idea and I thought people should do it, I'd prove to them that it works. Moodle is a perfect example of people saying, "no" and they've been converted. It had a bad start in the sense of, we had something called web CT in place and that got dropped. I was actually one of the people who said no to Moodle. I said, "I'm not going to use it, because it's going to be here for a few months and it's going to go", but other MOS started using it. There'll always be*

*staff who want to try these things out. A huge number of staff said, “no” and now the majority say, “yes” and those who are saying, “no” are beginning to get round to it. I think when people say, “no”, you prove to them that no is the wrong answer. Moodle is a very good example of this and it’s now part of staff development. For the last two years it’s been the highest recruiting course. If we try and prove it to them and they still say, “no”, then they’ve probably got a valid reason for it, but generally we prove that they should say, “yes”. I use it in all my lessons now.*

iv. What if someone says no, say, to staying behind for a meeting ending at 6pm? E.g. because they collect their kids at 5pm- how is that dealt with within a team?

*Very individually, we try and cater, if there’s a genuine reason then we will try to negotiate with them. Could you on this one occasion, get someone else to pick your kids up, but if there’s a definite they can’t do it, which does happen, we’ll try and rearrange meetings to help people out. The BTEC meetings we organise tend to be on a Wednesday afternoon, because people are free at that time. We have to remember that people’s lives don’t revolve around college. I can’t remember a situation where a MOS has said, “no” just to be awkward. People respect the fact that we try to work round them and then they’ll make more effort themselves to fit into the time-table.*

As an employer can’t the college turn round and say, “you definitely have to be here”?

*Yes, I’m sure they can and on occasions they have, but generally, rather than upset anybody, if it’s something they can’t do, then we’ll try and make arrangements for them. You find by doing that, staff will go out of their way to be helpful, be as flexible as they can. Staff seem to be very positive about the college they work for. We don’t really get any problems in that sort of sense. I think the flexibility works both ways. A lot of staff are asked to train on training days for no extra pay. If I asked a FT MOS to run this course, they don’t get any additional money for that, at all, because it’s during their normal working hours. Staff are really, really keen on running events.*

b) Are you familiar with the term ‘reflective practitioner’ in relation to staff learning?

Yes

i. What do you understand as ‘the reflective practitioner?’

*To me reflective practitioner is, judging what you’ve done and how you would improve on it. A lot of this is driven from the education department. A lot of this is taught during the PGCE, but we still encourage staff as qualified lecturers to look at what they’ve done and evaluate what they’ve done. One of the key parts of appraisal is to find out from the MOS how well they think they are doing and what training do they think they need. How they would improve on their year. Appraisal and lesson observations are the two key areas where we encourage reflection.*

ii. What are the personal qualities of being a lecturer? (e.g. and/or are these them?)

*Yes, I think you’ll find lecturers are human beings and they will look back and say, “well that unit, I did this year, didn’t go as well as I thought it should have”. They’ll sit down and rewrite their SOW. I think they expect to have to do that. A lot of*



*lecturers look back at value added and say, “well, this person should have got an A and got a B”. Often there are reasons, but they’ll look back and say, “maybe they didn’t understand this and maybe next time I should work on that”. I don’t think it’s lecturers being bad at their jobs, I think it’s lecturers continually improving in their jobs.*

c) I am trying to get an image of professionalism for college lecturers.

Please give your definition of what it means to be a professional in the role of a lecturer these days. i.e. what do you understand by being a professional lecturer?

*I think a professional lecturer definitely is reflective, puts students first and it’s about making sure that every lesson is a learning experience for the students. So, when they come out of a lesson they don’t think ‘oh, that was fun’. I want them to walk away and say, “today, I achieved this, this and this”. You’ve got to be prepared. You can’t just turn up to a lesson and say, “get on with this”. Professionalism is about making sure you know what you’re doing each lesson and making sure the students know where they are going in the lesson. The students are customers. We call them students, but really they’re not, they’re customers. We are getting money for them being here, we have to make sure we look after our customers. How well we give them what they’re paying for.*

ii. Has this definition changed for you since the time you first worked in FE? In what ways? i.e. looking back at what you thought when you were here (your PGCE)?

*Yes, definitely. I was quite naïve when I joined college, I think anybody is. You think it’s going to be something that’s really fun and really rewarding and it is rewarding, but you’ve got to find the rewards yourself, because very few students will say, “thank you nowadays”. They actually feel that you’re obliged to do your job and teach them and I guess they’re right, because we’re paid to do that. I think students are realising more and more, their right to have this education. So, you have to get your reward from looking at their achievement. When I joined college, I expected students to be really thankful for what you’ve done and really appreciate it and thank you for the help, but hasn’t happened. I think that’s fair enough. I think that’s how society is now. You pay for something, you expect to get something in return.*

iii. If a friend told you he/she was going to apply for a job in FE, how would you advise them?

*I’d say, “be very careful on the college you choose”. I love teaching in FE, probably because of where I work. The last college I worked in, I still enjoyed it, but it was a very different atmosphere. Staff hadn’t had a pay rise for a couple of years. Staff who feel that the college isn’t looking after them, become demoralised and they get miserable and the atmosphere becomes very negative. In the last college I was at, there was actually quite a negative atmosphere. When you wanted help from people, they would give you a bit of help, but they didn’t go out of their way, like they do here, because they’d think ‘what are they getting out of it’. So, I’d say to the person choose a good college. Choose a college that is not in huge amounts of debt. You’ll know by going round a college, you’ll know within a few minutes, by talking to staff, what the atmosphere’s like in that college. They can’t hide it, no matter how hard*

*they try. When I came here, I had my tour and I amazed talking to staff, how they told me it was an excellent place to work. Going into FE, it's a business and I think some businesses are doing better than others.*

Thank you for your time and comments.

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### **(c) Interview with a novice**

#### **Preamble**

When did you first join the college?  
*I started in September.*

So why did you come into teaching/training?  
*I used to manage in X and it was pretty horrific hours, I was doing 70-80 hours per week. I always wanted to go into teaching at some stage, It seemed an ideal time to do it. I was going to leave until a bout 10 years time, but I thought, I'll do it now.*

### **Interview Questions**

#### ***Part 1: Work-time and tasks / work content and quality***

a.what changes in work have you experienced in your role as a lecturer?  
(Note any matters or incidents eg curriculum issues, inspection, new staff/ management)

*When I first started, I had to design a course and design all of the resources. So, that was a big chunk out of my week, but now I teach more on the other side, on the BTEC and I'm taking over units from people who didn't have any resources. So, what I was doing on level 2 I'm now doing it on BTEC. I'm designing the unit from scratch. I also have two tutor groups now, rather than one, which is not ideal and creates an awful lot of work. Because now I've got 40 students to tutor. So, all of their issues take up a big chunk of my time.*

ii.Can you tell me how the changes came about?

*I was asked about it before the end of last term, whether I would be interested in tutoring a BTEC group and because I teach on the BTEC and because I'd like to get into that area, I said yes. I thought it was going to be the first group and not the full first year group. There are only 10 second years and they are quite settled. Unfortunately they gave me the first year group. Now I've got 40 tutees settling down, which not ideal, but these things happen*

iii.How many hours a week do you spend at work now?

*I'm doing a lot of overtime at the moment. So, this first month I was teaching about 32 hours a week, maybe more than that – 35 and about another 5 hours at work latched on top of that, to prepare all these lessons. Then a big chunk of that I have to take home, because 5 hours is not enough to prepare 35 hours of lessons. Obviously a lot of that is repeated from last year, but a good chunk of it was new lessons.*

b. So in addition to the changes in your work duties, I am told that in colleges there's a lot of initiatives going on. - integrating 'learning styles' into lesson plans, classroom observations, basic skills mapping to lessons, less delivery time per module etc. Concerning responsibilities given to you, do you feel that more or fewer demands are being made?

*There's obviously a lot more, because Every Child Matters is a key thing at the moment. We've got an Ofsted inspection soon. So, they're quite into differentiation. So, yes there's a lot more on than before. A lot more paperwork really.*

i. In future, would you say that that workload or work intensity is going to get worse or get better?

*I think the amount of paperwork is still going to stay the same, but I'll get better and quicker at doing it and I find ways round things. All this tutorial paperwork they give you....there's no reason why it couldn't be done by email in some sort of booklet form, rather than in triplicate. I said to them the other day why don't we do a booklet, instead of handing round these bits of paper. The registers are all done on email now. So, that makes life a lot easier. For every chunk of work they give you, you can find a way to reduce the work, so it ends up the same.*

## **Part 2: College organisation/training and learning**

a. Compared with your first days here at the college, can you identify which work issue causes you most concern now?

*Probably the Ofsted inspection. The amount of demands on my time, teaching and so forth...you have to do it by the book ie lesson plans in writing for every lesson and reflecting back on them. You just don't ....nearly have enough time. You do these things in your head and you scribble down notes..you sort of take a preprinted lesson plan to every lesson, rather than scraps of paper. It's pretty impossible I'd say. Some days when I do 7 hours on the trot in different parts of the building, and doing 32 hours a week teaching, you can't do it.*

i. Have you suggested how the issue should be tackled?

*Lesson plans seem to be a bit of an enigma in that they appear when Ofsted appears and don't reappear again. Everyone plans a lesson, but creating the paper work is something you do for Ofsted. My worry is they'll tell me Ofsted is coming next week and I'll have to create 32 lesson plans, one for the week before and one for the week after, so 96 lesson plans and I won't have the time.*

ii. Did it turn out to your satisfaction?/ So...have you spoken to anyone about this?

*No, cos I'll have to make the time. I s'pose that's something that's looming, that I'd rather was out of the way.*

b. Can you comment on any factors currently affecting your own style...

i. For 'formal' and in 'informal' settings with students? (Eg lecture/ lesson *contrasted* with 1-1).

Do you feel that you've developed a style of work with students in lessons?

*Yes.*

ii. Please describe your style

*I definitely have got a style now. I'm quite strict. So that makes my life and their life easier, because they're going out into the workplace within a month. So, whereas last year if they didn't turn up to a lesson, it was possible they would get challenged, but not likely. Now they are challenged for every lesson they miss. If they're late they get sent to the library and have to do semi-essays. There's quite ....because it's right from the start of the course, no one's said this course is really strict. They just assume that's the way the course is. Because I took over the tutor group from someone after 3 months, it's difficult to take that line, when they've been quite slack beforehand. So, this time I took them from induction, both groups and told them all the rules, clearly outlined it now there's 2 groups out there that don't eat and drink in lessons, aren't late and if they are sick they phone in.*

iii. How much say do you feel you have for developing a style in the classroom?

*100% . As long as it works, you can do what you like. My style's completely different to X Obviously hers works, mine works.*

iv. Can you comment on any factors currently affecting your own style of work with colleagues? (Eg meeting *contrasted* with staff workroom)

*Our meetings tend to be fairly light-hearted. I'm quite good at handling people; I flip from how I deal with one person to how I deal with another. That goes back to my trade days.*

c. Can you give an example of learning as a group of lecturers / staff that occurred last year? Can you describe how this group 'eureka' moment came about?

*We had a presentation to us on differentiation and what Ofsted were looking to see. We send round the scores of a basic skills test to all our tutors, they said we should be given a quick description of the student and the issues and then email that round to all the other tutors on the course. So, I've done that and I think that's quite a good idea. Interviewing as well, they came and said maybe interviewing could be done in a better way. We designed an interview day, rather than grabbing an hour in between lessons. Now they'll all be done 20 on a day and they will be presented the same*

*presentation that all the courses in this department get, rather than just the one they've applied for.*

d. Please give an example of feedback that you received last year? From..

i. managers (When and in what ways was this constructive or not constructive?)

*Yes, I had an appraisal and they do like a probationary thing as well for the first 10 months. They all seemed very pleased with me. I got excellent marks and that was about it really. It was over in about 2 minutes. The appraisal was a bit longer, they wanted to know what I was going to do next year, but to be honest I wrote it for them.*

ii. yourself? (What about reflection, what about feedback you get from yourself?)

*I scribble notes down on my SOW, to say that was rubbish, that didn't work, that was good, use it again. Other than that I haven't got time!*

e. How much contact do you have with your line manager these days to help or advise you on day to day matters?

*Y ran the course up until the time that I took over. He's the boss, so I've carried on dealing with him. Towards the end of the year, W is kind of head of school, he's below Y, but he's more operational, so I deal 99% with W now. Now that I teach more on the BTEC and other courses, I deal with W (DHTT).*

i. Can you describe this contact? (regular scheduled supervision/ held in private /casual arrangement/ informal / 5 minutes in staff workroom every now and then/ over lunch in canteen)

*There's someone there that you can go to and know exactly what to...what the answer is, before that might not have been the case.*

Is this contact scheduled in?

*It's just grabbing someone*

f. Do you feel able to raise honestly, and without prejudice, concerns about your work with your line manager? *Yes*

i. Please give an example of this from last year.

*They want me to move to a different course and to do a foundation degree next year. They brought up with me who they thought they would get to take over this course from me and I wasn't particularly happy about the person they chose. I told them and now they've picked somebody else.*

ii. How supported do you feel when you have a concern to resolve?

*Yes definitely, they definitely listen.*

g. How do work relationships compare with when you came into the sector... (eg more/less supportive, collegiate, personal).

i. with peers

*They're probably a lot better, I'd say. There's quite a good camaraderie in here, which I might have been hoping for, but wasn't necessarily expecting. People are starting to share a bit, as well.*

ii. with managers?

*Y is an exceptionally good head. The assistant principals, we don't usually see them. I haven't been in a meeting where they've taken part in it. I'll go and see W now and again, normally when I want something, but other than that there's pretty minimal contact with them.*

iii. senior managers? (Vice principals and the principal)

*The VP is quite hands on. He's very...he arranges meeting where you can go and talk to him. Whereas the principal you see at big dos and that's about it really.*

h. Induction

When you started here

i. did you have manager as mentor?

*I think you are always given a mentor. So, I've pretty much taken over the course. I don't really need anyone to guide me on the course now, but you always need a mentor, because he does observations, observes the lesson and presumably he will do my appraisal at the end of the year and if I get stuck I can always ask him. But as far as the course is concerned, that's pretty much locked down now. So, I don't need any help with it.*

ii. who else helped you?

*No-one, because when you're part time you just come in and do your hours and then you go. So, now that I'm full time I can do more and everyone shares, but when you are part time you can't .....you're kind of left out of the loop. You've got your full timers who know what's going on and you've got the others who do the best they can, with the hours that they can and don't really know what's going on or any changes...it's up to the full timers to tell the others.*

iii. did you have an induction?

*When I first arrived I didn't have any. Once I was fulltime then I had a two day induction. As a part timer, you are employed by [agency], so you not employed by the college, so you just come in and work like an outside agent. You are not an employee, they don't interview/ do induction. Obviously, DHTT showed me where things were*

*and what to do, but there wasn't an HR based induction. He's deputy, so he's kind of second head of the whole lot. Since I've started this course, I report to him*

g. tell me about the teaching when you started.

*I was pretty much thrown in at the deep end I s'pose. You see how you get on and then, if you can cope then...I really enjoyed it. I didn't actually find it as difficult as I thought I was going to. It was quite nerve racking the first one, but after half an hour I just...I was fine.*

i. and preparing for it?

*So, what I do to manage, as I go along, is basically tutoring and dealing with all the problems they have, assessments and whatever. If I didn't do all my prep. in the holidays, I would be in trouble, I wouldn't have time at all. I'd rather have it done and out of the way, because the other staff are repeating year on year, so they don't have to as much prep as I do.*

teacher training

i. What ITT course are you following?

*The CFET. It is the same as the 1<sup>st</sup> year Cert Ed, so I'll go straight on to the 2<sup>nd</sup> year. There is 2 parts to it, but here they bunch it together, so you do 2 years in 1.*

So that means you'll get your qualification for teaching within your 1<sup>st</sup> year?

*I'll get a pt qualification, but it won't count as full....but I'll have something, yes. That's why I did it, so I could get a certificate after a year as well as the full Cert Ed next year.*

ii. What do you think about the academic side of it?

*The essays are a pain, because all the dates come at once, towards the end, when you're doing the assessments here. So, they don't make any attempt to spread out the course....they'd be better off doing one every three weeks. I don't find the level very difficult, but I do find 80% of it an utter waste of time. You don't learn anything, they don't teach you anything. They teach you how to fill out paperwork, which is useful, lesson plans and SOW, but that's pretty much all I've got from it. I don't think that the people teaching on the teacher training are good enough teachers for me to learn much from and pretty much everyone else on the course says the same. We are being taught by people who aren't inspiring and aren't particularly good at what they do. It's almost as if the people who end up in teacher training, are the ones who couldn't hack it.*

Teaching the 16 year olds?

*The lesson that I was looking forward to, the only lesson, was the classroom behaviour, because I have battles with groups and I've kind of learnt myself how to*

*deal with them and I was waiting for this golden lesson where I was going to be shown.....holy grail! This is going to make my life easier and it was a complete waste of time. There was no real....the theory in it didn't apply to anything and there was no real advice....no real...this is how they say you should do it, but why don't you try this? The person teaching had only ever taught adults, so that's how they delivered it, as though they were teaching....this is how you control the behaviour of a class full of adults and when we said we teach 16-19 year olds and it's a different kettle of fish altogether....how do you ....she didn't have a clue. So, after that I've the attitude, I'm just getting a qualification now. I'm not learning anything here. Quite frankly I haven't learnt anything that I haven't picked up myself in the classroom. All it has basically done is stuff that you pick up through common sense and experience. It's segmented and put into little boxes for you....you think I already knew that...that applies to that....I worked that out for myself. Maslow's theory, Bloom's theory...I knew it anyway, but now I've got some way of putting it into a box.*

I see...

*Its pure common sense that they've managed to compartmentalise, but they have ballsed that course up completely, because they gave us a tutor and she left, they gave us another one....and we're on our fourth one now and each one has done Maslow. So we said we've done, it is a total waste of time, can you stop teaching us....Some of the lessons are that ridiculous, they'll teach you you've got be careful when you're dealing with pens, because it can be embarrassing if you get an ink splodge on your shirt. I thought, what am I doing here learning how to keep the pen lid on. I wouldn't even teach it to my level 2 students. So, I'm not very impressed with teacher training at all.*

How do you deal with the difficult students then?

*I'm self taught I guess. I just picked it up as I went along and you learn...you make mistakes and think the next....the first group that I took, I went in quite strict anyway, because I'm that way inclined and it kind of worked for a while, but they are a difficult group. So, towards the end I started having battles with them, but other groups that I have taken on since January, I have gone in very strict to start with and that gives you an easier time later on. You can ride that through for the whole of the year. If they know that you can be strict, then they won't muck about for weeks and weeks and then every now and again you just take on someone and discipline them quite severely and then you get another 5 or 6 weeks of peace and quiet....just a normal atmosphere. If you've got a really good group you can relax with them, but I think you need that first day and the first contact, to be quite stern and aloof. If you do that, that'll carry you through. I know X struggles, because she was quite friendly to start with..she finds it difficult to be stern, so they walk all over her. They are a difficult group, my lot.*

iii.Do you think it will be easier next year/time?

*Yes, definitely, because it's....the selection process is totally different. This year because it was a new course, there were actually only 2 or 3 of the 12 actually applied for the course. They were pinched from other courses, or they're rejects. They are a group of quite unmotivated girls and a lot of them didn't want to do that course*



*in the first place. It makes it quite difficult, whereas next year I've interviewed and selected, so they'll be better to start with and I'll have learned how to deal with them right from the start.*

iv. Why do you think it'll be different.....?

*because I was the new boy to start with and didn't really know what I was doing.*

The students knew that?

*Yes. I think they probably did with X; me I can kind of blag that, pretend that I know what I'm doing even if I don't. They still don't know that I'm teacher training, because they complain about other lecturers that they've got, who are in teacher training and don't know what they are doing, as if I've been around for years. They don't realise that I started at the same time as them.*

That's complementary, isn't it?

*Well I just felt I was quite a good liar. (laughter)*

v. Do you enjoy working with the students?

*Yes, definitely. Some groups far more than others, but on the whole yes. When you know that they've learnt something and you can turn the whole class on and off. If they are misbehaving, you just tell them something...recount something that happened to you and they shut up and start listening. That's quite nice cos you do know they actually respect you and they do want to learn. So I use that quite a lot if they start playing up. I tell them a story...*

*You get good classes, you get ... bad classes. You dread some of them. I haven't got to that stage, but you get the names of certain groups....I've got a couple that are difficult, I wouldn't say that I dread teaching them. I just go in ready. Whereas I can be quite relaxed.....with others.*

### ***Part 3: What it means to be a lecturer***

a. When you look back over the last year, identify one highlight for you and one low point. Please tell me something about each one.

*Highlight was getting 12 out of 13 poor candidates to pass, to all hold down jobs and one of them is promoted to head receptionist. Another highlight, there's a girl on the course at the moment who's frighteningly shy, who I took on basically against my better judgment, because I felt sorry for her. It is a very social job at the end of the day and if she's terrified...nearly cried at the interview because I was asking questions and since she has started the course....she's just got a job across the road. Low points are...I lost a couple of students out of this group, in the first month. So, my figures aren't going to be as good next year. I lost...I went on holiday...they were sold the course by the interviewer, rather than were told about it. So, they were*

*pushed onto a course that they didn't really want to do...within a month they didn't want to do it.*

- i. Could you give me examples of daily routines that give most satisfaction and,
- ii. least satisfaction?

*Most satisfaction is seeing when the lights come on, they understand it and when they do some sort of presentation or course work back to you. Least satisfaction is going from one lesson to another, to another, to another and not having time to prepare for it and so not giving as good a lesson as if you did have time to prepare for it.*

- d. Finally, I am trying to get an image of professionalism for college lecturers.
- i. Please give me your definition of a what makes a professional lecturer.

*I think there is a big chunk that's personal....I think there is a chunk that's support and I think there is a chunk that's knowing your subject. Especially at this level. If you have been there and done it, then you're just 5 steps ahead. I don't believe for 5 seconds that....I do have teacher training, some of the people are training managers from outside and they've got this ethos that anyone can teach anything. I don't believe that. I think you've got to have had some sort of experience, to be able to teach at this level. I think at higher levels as well. When I did my masters not one of the lecturers that taught us had ever worked in X trade and we would ask them questions, they would just draw a blank. All of a sudden I can remember, you just switch off...this guy doesn't know what he's talking about. There's no way I can learn something from this guy, because he never worked in X trade. So, they were teaching from a pure....purely out of a text book. We would say: how would that work? How would you market something in a X trade?..... they just didn't know.*

So, are you talking there about something to do with credibility?

*Yes, and relevance. Everything you are teaching at this level and any other level..if everything you're teaching, you can relate to the subject...the hotel management guide....every single example I give is X related....a further example will be this is what I did and this how it worked out. So, you make it relevant to them and then you tell them about your personal experience...and you might ask them questions about where they work and you'll be able to advise them on what they are doing. So that it's 100% relevant to them...then they get the feeling, this is someone I can learn from. Whereas when I was taught, all the way through university, apart from the y tutor, I was taught by people who didn't know. Who were transferring textbooks to me and I could have read it myself. Any attempt by students to try and make it relevant to them, drew a complete blank.*

Thank you for your time and comments.

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## Appendix 4.2

### List of interviewees in the four colleges

#### 1) Interviewees in college A

	<b>Novice lecturers</b>	<b>Remarks</b>	<b>Comments</b>
1.	HM novice (vocational)	Novice to FE. Trainer in previous career in service industry	Changed to programme manager with more tutor responsibilities during first year
2.	GB novice (vocational)	Novice to FE. Trainer in previous craft industry	Began on light timetable then increased to full timetable in first year
3.	PP novice (vocational)	Part time supply work in colleges before current post. Key skills tutor (agency worker)	Initial contact made but unable to carry out interviewing as he left the college.

	<b>Experienced lecturers</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
4.	EE experienced (vocational)	Full time (50% instructor/50% lecturer)
5.	WH experienced (vocational)	Programme manager with responsibilities for course and tutor group
6.	BS experienced (vocational/ academic)	Programme manager with responsibilities for course and tutor group

	<b>Management grade</b>	<b>Background</b>
7.	Clerk to Board	Business professional (HR background)
8.	Vice Principal (VP)	Formerly a lecturer
9.	HR Director (HRD)	Business professional (CiPD)
10.	Staff Development Manager (SDM)	Lecturer (still on minimal teaching hours)
11.	Quality Assurance Manager (QA Manager)	Business professional
12.	Head of Teaching Team (AG HTT)	Lecturer but with only a few hours teaching per week as Head of Team

## 2) Interviewees in college B

	<b>Novices</b>	<b>Remarks</b>	<b>Comments</b>
13.	GF novice (Academic/vocational)	Recently qualified in PGCE	Started on light timetable as NQT (1 <sup>st</sup> year)
14.	CC novice (Vocational)	Trainer in service industry	Initial contact but not willing to participate in extended interview

	<b>Experienced Lecturers</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
15.	RT experienced (Academic)	Programme manager with responsibilities for course and tutor group
16.	RM experienced (Academic)	Programme manager with responsibilities for course and tutor group
17.	DD experienced (Academic/vocational)	Programme manager with responsibilities for course and tutor group

	<b>Management grade</b>	<b>Background</b>
18.	Clerk to Board	Administrator/ school secretary
19.	Vice Principal (VP)	Lecturer- no teaching in VP role
20.	HR Manager (HRM)	Career administrator in schools and colleges
21.	Staff Development Manager (SDM)	F/T lecturer with a few hours of remission for SDM role per week
22.	Head of Teaching Team (OB HTT)	Lecturer but with only a few hours teaching per week as Head of Team
23.	Deputy Head of Teaching Team (KK DHTT)	F/T lecturer with remission for deputy role

### 3) Interviewees in college C

	<b>Novices</b>	<b>Remarks</b>	<b>Comments</b>
24.	HE novice (academic)	Novice to FE. Trainer in previous job in industry	Promoted to course manager with more tutor responsibilities
25.	IB novice (vocational)	Novice to FE. Trainer in previous career	Promoted to course manager with more tutor responsibilities

	<b>Experienced lecturers</b>	<b>Remark</b>
26.	HN experienced (vocational and academic)	Programme manager with responsibilities for course and tutor group
27.	BU experienced (academic)	Programme manager with responsibilities for course and tutor group
28.	SE experienced (vocational)	Programme manager with responsibilities for course and tutor group
29.	TC experienced (vocational and academic)	Programme manager with responsibilities for course and tutor group

	<b>Management grade</b>	<b>Background</b>
30.	Clerk to Board	Business professional (public administration)
31.	HR Assistant Manager (HR Assistant Manager)	Business professional (CiPD)
32.	Vice Principal/ Director (VP)	Lecturer - no teaching in current post
33.	Staff Development Manager (SDM)	HR background - no teaching
34.	Head of Teaching Team (AB HTT)	Lecturer but with only a few hours teaching per week as Head of Team
35.	Deputy Head of Teaching Team (OR DHTT)	F/T lecturer with remission for deputy role

#### 4) Interviewees in pilot college

	<b>Novices</b>	<b>Remarks</b>	<b>Comments</b>
36.	NN novice (academic/novice)	Novice to FE. Trainer in previous job in industry	Promoted to course manager with more tutor responsibilities
37.	SS novice (vocational)	Novice to FE. Trainer in previous career in care services	Promoted to course manager with more tutor responsibilities
38.	GW novice (vocational)	Novice to FE. Trainer in previous craft trade	Changed to course manager with more tutor responsibilities during first year
39.	DF novice (vocational)	Novice to FE. Trainer in previous craft trade	Course manager with further tutor responsibilities during first year

	<b>Experienced Lecturers</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
40.	MM experienced (Academic/vocational)	Course manager with tutor group
41.	IR experienced (Academic/vocational)	Course manager with tutor group

	<b>Management grade</b>	<b>Background</b>
42.	Vice Principal (VP)	Lecturer- no teaching in VP role
43.	HR Manager (HRM)	HR professional (CiPD) - service industry background
44.	Staff Development Manager (SDM)	F/T lecturer with a few hours of remission for SDM role per week
45.	Head of Teaching Team (DD HTT)	Lecturer but with a few hours teaching per week
46.	Deputy Head of Teaching Team (GY DHTT)	F/T lecturer with remission for deputy role

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## Glossary of terms commonly used in this thesis

Abbreviation	
AoC	Association of Colleges
CEL	Centre for Excellence in Leadership
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CPVE	Certificate of Pre-vocational Education
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DHTT	Deputy Head of Teaching Team
DIUS	Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills
ECM	Every Child Matters
FD	Foundation Degree
FE	Further Education
FEDA	Further Education Development Agency
FEFC	Further Education Funding Council
FENTO	Further Education National Training Organisation
GFEC	General Further Education College
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HRD	Human Resource Director
HRM	Human Resource Manager
HTT	Head of Teaching Team
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILT	Integrated Learning and Teaching
ITT	Initial Teacher Training
LEA	Local Education Authority
IfL	Institute for Learning
LLUK	Lifelong Learning- United Kingdom
LMS	Local Management of Schools
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
LSDA	Learning and Skills Development Agency
LSN	Learning and Skills Network
LSS	Learning and Skills Sector
MSC	Manpower Services Commission
MIS	Management Information System
NATFHE	National Association of Teachers and Lecturers in Further and Higher Education
NPM	New Public Managerialism
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
QA	Quality Assurance
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
QIA	Quality Improvement Agency
QTLS	Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills
RDA	Regional Development Agency
SDM	Staff Development Manager
SOW	Scheme of Work

SSC	Skills Sector Council
SSD	Social Services Department
SMT	Senior Management Team
STEPS	Special Temporary Employment Programme
SU	Standards Unit
TVEI	Technical and Vocational Education Initiative
TLA	Teaching and Learning
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment
VP	Vice Principal
YOP	Youth Opportunities Programme
YTS	Youth Training Scheme